





Rev. Valentine A. Jankowiak

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# CAMPAIGNING WITH CHRIST'S CHURCH

*A Course of Sermons for Lent  
with a Sermon for Easter*

BY

WILLIAM I. LONERGAN, S.J.

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## FOREWORD

THE favorable reactions of different congregations in various parts of the country that have listened to the following discourses have emboldened their author to offer them for publication. It is his hope that in printed form they may reach a wider circle of the Faithful for their spiritual edification and profit.

Prepared as a Lenten course, the sermons were meant, with the evident exception of two or three, to portray some of the glories of Catholicism. They aimed at instruction and inspiration, and were so composed on the theory that we appreciate only what we know. If Catholics are to be enthusiastic for their religion and its splendid prerogatives and achievements, they must know what these are.

The discourses make no pretense at novelty of doctrine. They are frank statements of old truths whose importance and significance and newer applications are being lost sight of in many quarters because of the atmosphere of indifference in which our people live.

For occasional passages the preacher is indebted to notes which he made when reading the sermons of co-laborers in the vineyard. Unfortunately he failed at the time to indicate the sources. In assuming the approval of his brethren to use these excerpts and profit by the fruits of their zeal, he regrets that he cannot give credit where it is due.



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# CAMPAIGNING WITH CHRIST'S CHURCH

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## I

### THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

*(Ash Wednesday)*

WE read in history how on one occasion Baltasar, the last of the kings of the great Babylonian Empire, prepared a sumptuous banquet for a thousand of the chief men of his realm. At the height of the revelry while the sacrilegious monarch and his guests made merry and toasted their pagan gods, there suddenly appeared on the wall opposite where the king sat the hand of a man writing. In an instant all the glory of Baltasar's majesty and all the magnificence of his royal pomp were gone. As he watched the uncanny form trace its mysterious message, a cold sweat came over him, and beads of icy perspiration stood out upon his blanched cheek. Haggard and agitated, he ordered his wise men to be brought in, that they might tell him what the apparition meant. They came, but were unable to interpret the vision. Then the queen-mother re-

minded her alarmed son that among the Jewish captives was a prophet, Daniel, remarkable for his ability to unravel secrets. "Let him be sent for," cried the monarch. And Daniel came and stood before the trembling Baltasar, and read the words: *Mane, Thecel, Phares*. And then he explained the meaning of the apparition: *Mane*, God hath numbered thy days, they are completed; *Thecel*, Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting; *Phares*, Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Hardly had the prophet finished his ominous announcement when the shouting of enemies outside the palace gates was heard and the call to arms, and that very night the king perished by a bloody death, and the Babylonian Empire came to an end.

The average Christian, my brethren, is not unlike the deluded Baltasar. Engrossed with worries in the daily struggle for existence or distracted with amusements—perhaps falsely secure in some power he possesses or intoxicated with pride—he too often forgets the more serious business of life and grows careless about the one thing necessary for him, the safety of the kingdom of his immortal soul. But year by year Holy Mother the Church, full of maternal solicitude for the welfare of her children, breaks in upon the even tenor of his ways and sounds a note of warning. With the thumb of her priest she traces on his forehead with blessed ashes a sign that bids him pause—a sign that, like the handwriting on Baltasar's wall, is full of meaning, and that will be his

salvation or his doom according as he heeds or neglects its message. "Remember man," she says, "that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

Lent is a heavenly messenger charged with a great message. Once a year it bids us, like thrifty merchants in the great mart of time, stop and take stock. Once a year it halts us in our journey through life to remind us that we have not here a lasting city, and that the life beyond the grave must never be sacrificed to any temporal advantage. Once a year it speaks to us of the really serious problems of life—of man's end and the things of eternity. "What doth it profit a man," it says, "if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

In general, the business of Lent is, to adapt St. Paul's expression, to make sure our calling and election. For this end Holy Mother the Church suggests especially three things: penance, prayer, and earnest thoughtfulness.

We all know the necessity of some sort of penance for eternal salvation. "Unless you do penance," Our Lord says, "you shall all likewise perish." There can be no genuine Christianity without it. For there are only two roads to heaven, the road of innocence and the road of penitence—the way of an Agnes and an Aloysius, or the way of a Magdalen and an Augustine. Only too truly our consciences bear witness that our sins have closed the way of innocence against us. Penance, then, in some form is really necessary for everyone who is in earnest about his eternal salvation. As St. Augustine says: "We must

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either do penance here or burn hereafter." There is no alternative, and there can be no shirking the burden.

To unify this penance and impart to it her special benediction, the Church prescribes during the Lenten season a rigid fast and some additional days of abstinence. I take it that you know her laws, and it is not my intention to go into them. Suffice it to say that, if anyone doubts about his or her obligation, the pastor or confessor should be consulted, and thus all danger of committing a mortal sin through a false conscience will be removed; for, though the laws of fasting and abstinence are strict, still it is not the mind of the Church to make people notably weak or sick, or to unfit men for business or women for their domestic duties. If fasting is a Christian virtue, so is prudence. Accordingly, in applying her laws, the Church is most indulgent, so that practically the Lenten prescriptions cost most people little or no inconvenience.

That does not mean, however, that they are exempt from all penitential practices during these forty days. As we said above, penance is a necessity, and there are plenty of ways of doing penance, plenty of ways to fast, besides curbing the appetite for food.

Your eyes, for example, that have so often led you into the snares of Satan, can fast in their own way from curiously beholding vain and criminal objects, and your ears from listening to poisonous discourses. Your tongue can fast from slander and detraction and idle gossip, and your hands from

immoral acts. Your heart can check its irregular desires, and all your senses and faculties can fast from the occasions of sin. "This," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the true fast, for what avails it to abstain from certain foods and then wallow in sin?" Or, as St. Ambrose puts it: "What avails it to abstain from liquor, and be drunk with iniquity?"

All can find very many ways of denying themselves relaxations and pleasures, which, while they may not be sinful, make a very grateful offering to Almighty God. And the great advantage of self-restraint of this kind is that, by denying oneself in what is licit, one becomes stronger to resist temptation to do what is illicit. Where there is a good will, it is not hard to invent ways of doing penance.

What a fine penance, for example, it would be for some of our people, especially our young people, not to read the scandals that fill our daily papers, and the accounts of crime that do no good and often sully their consciences! Try substituting a little spiritual reading for the time you usually devote to novels or light trashy literature during the rest of the year: you will probably find it as hard as making your breakfast on a cup of coffee and a couple of ounces of bread.

Our first concern in Lent, then, must be penance of some sort. But it must be penance that is really salutary. Remember, too, that we should do the penance ourselves, not make others do it. Let me illustrate what I mean. Here is a man who is exempt from fasting because he has to work very hard; yet,

he says he is going to give up smoking during Lent. A fine idea! However, it may be that habit has made tobacco a sedative for his nerves. He gives it up, and what happens? Well, he grows cross and irritable and cranky, and everybody who comes in contact with him suffers. Now, that is not Christian penance. That is uncharitableness. That is the very thing that brings religion into disrepute.

Again, one gives up, let us say, going to the theater. Another excellent penance, and commonly practised even by the most careless Catholics! But meanwhile he makes not the least attempt to curb his habitual profanity or indecent talk, and so spoils much of the value and merit of his penance.

Again, some women will abstain from many little delicacies at table, and flatter themselves they are doing penance. It may be they are. But meanwhile, what about their spirit of sloth? Are their homes as neat and tidy as they should be? Why not try some little sacrifices to make them more pleasant for their husbands on their return from work, or more agreeable for their growing sons and daughters? Real true penance is full of charity, and it means denying ourselves for God's sake where it is going to make us better men and women, more devoted husbands and wives, more obedient sons and daughters, more considerate employers and more tractable and industrious employes. That is the genuine Lenten spirit of self-denial.

But in the mind of the Church, my brethren, Lent should also be a time of special prayer. Prayer is

the raising of the mind and heart to God to adore Him, to thank Him for His gifts, to express our sorrow for offending Him ourselves and for the sins of others, and to implore His blessing upon our own lives and upon mankind in general.

Like penance, prayer is a necessity: we have much to be grateful for, much to repent of, much to beg. The child needs prayer that the habit of prayer may be formed in his little soul. Young people need prayer to overcome rising passion and establish the kingdom of God firmly in their hearts. In mature life, we all need prayer—in adversity lest we grow discouraged, in prosperity even more, lest we become too much attached to this world.

Besides, prayer is the one condition God puts upon His gifts. "Ask and you shall receive," Christ says. And again: "If you ask the Father anything in My name, that will He do." And again: "Pray that you enter not into temptation." And St. Paul says: "Pray always." And what Christ and His Apostles taught with their lips, they exemplified in their lives, and Scripture tells us how Our Lord spent forty days in prayer and penance before His public career, and that time and again during the three years that followed He passed whole nights on the mountain-side in prayer. In His sublime prayer in the garden of Gethsemani, He showed us just how humbly, perseveringly and resignedly we ought to pray.

Yet, despite the nature of prayer, that it is sweet converse with God; despite its necessity, that it is to our souls as the very air is to our bodies; and

despite Christ's exhortations and injunctions and example, is it not strange that prayer plays so small a part in our lives? The ordinary Catholic who considers himself a pretty good sort of fellow—I wonder how often his thoughts turn to God during the day, how much time he gives to God out of his day. One hour out of the twenty-four? I doubt it. Half an hour? I doubt it too, unless for some few who make it a point to attend Holy Mass on weekdays. Yet nothing is simpler. And, far from interfering with our work, it would certainly improve it.

I am not speaking, either, of those long prayers with which we are all familiar—the beads or stations or litanies. But I would insist now rather on that occasional raising of our minds and hearts to God off and on during the day and during our work, particularly in short ejaculations: *My God, I believe in Thee! I hope in Thee! I love Thee! My Jesus, mercy! Sweet Heart of Jesus, be my love! Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation! Lord, have mercy on the poor souls in purgatory!*

Surely, there is not a single one of us who does not need more prayer in his life, and no time of the year is better adapted to fostering a spirit of prayer than this holy season that puts us in such close touch with Christ's Passion, and drives home in the dramatic stories of Gethsemani and Calvary the lessons of the love of the great Heart of God for man. "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son for its redemption."

A moment ago we were discussing penance. Why

not make prayer a penance? Surely, there are many Catholic men and women whom rising a little earlier to hear daily Mass would not kill. Yet, it is an excellent Lenten practice, most pleasing to God and most meritorious. What about a few extra Holy Communions during Lent? What about an occasional visit to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament? What about the family saying the beads together of an evening? Time was when that used to be the great sign of Faith among our devoted Irish people, but it is little thought and less honor the Blessed Mother of God gets of a night in many of our twentieth-century homes. More prayer, then, is what God wants during Lent.

However, neither penance nor prayer will make us a great deal better—and self-improvement should be the practical aim of our Lent—unless we add to them honest thought about God and our relations to Him. Ages ago the Wise Man said: “With desolation is the world made desolate because no man thinks in his heart.” His words ring just as true today. “No man thinks in his heart!” How few thinkers in the world, and especially how few there are who think frequently and earnestly about the things of God!

Accordingly, each one of you must during this holy season go back and dwell in thoughtful meditation on the great fundamental truths of life. You must put to yourselves those old momentous questions that solve the whole riddle of human existence, and answer them sincerely, candidly, practically. You

know them well. No need for me to remind you that this life is only a period of probation, that you are not made for time but for eternity, that your happiness is not to be found in the goods of earth but in the treasures of heaven. No need to remind you that wealth and honor and pleasure are not the goal of life, and that, though one may aspire for what is lawful in them, he must always be on his guard against their accompanying dangers.

Lent, my brethren, is a season for serious thought. In the light of the great principle that this life is only a fleeting shadow, here today and gone tomorrow, and that man's only reason for existence is to praise God and save his soul, look about you and study the world. Study the men and women you jostle up against in everyday life, study their conditions, and then see how dismal a failure most of them are making of life. They may be wealthy, they may be honored, they may have every indulgence money can buy, yet whither are they rushing? "Remember man that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return," the Church says today. I wonder how many of them ever think of that.

And then turn your thoughts upon yourself. Whither are you going? Let the searchlight of God's truth light up your heart that you may read the answer to your question. Whither are you going? You were created for God: perhaps your conscience will tell you you forget God. You were created for eternity: perhaps you live as if time were eternal. You were created to sanctify yourself in this life

and save your soul: yet how much of that life has perhaps been anything but holy? Even now as you look into your heart—that heart which should belong to the kingdom of Christ—you will perhaps find the banner of Satan set up there, you will find it stained with mortal sin, the one thing that God hates, the one thing that makes man His enemy, the one thing that makes human life a failure.

Perhaps, if you look carefully into yourself, your conscience will tell that you have actually forgotten what mortal sin is. I do not mean theoretically. Oh no, you know as well as I do that it is a grievous offense against God's law. But you have forgotten its malice and its enormity. You have forgotten that it means that into the face of the omnipotent God a weak puny creature hurls the gauntlet of defiance: "I will not serve." You have forgotten who God is and what you are. You have forgotten how God loathes and punishes sin; how for one sin of thought the very angels of heaven were plunged into the bottomless abyss of hell. You have forgotten that for one sin of disobedience Paradise was closed to Adam and Eve; that they were deprived of untold gifts both of nature and of grace for themselves and their posterity; and that all the evils and sufferings and miseries that now come into your life have a relation to that one sin. You have forgotten that buried in hell are souls that committed but one mortal sin, and that they will be there burning in those unquenchable flames for all eternity. Aye, you have forgotten, above all, what it cost to atone for sin,

you have forgotten the lesson of the crucifix—that it took a God-Man to suffer and die in shame and ignominy to satisfy for sin and open the closed gates of heaven to the sinner.

Ah, how many of our Catholic men and women—despite their faith, despite all the graces they get from God, despite their better selves—drink in mortal sin like water! Pride and sloth and avarice and sensuality are their masters, and they indulge their passions freely and unrestrainedly. Let me ask them: “You sinful man, you who are the slave of luxury or debauchery or gambling, is that what you were created for? Is it by glutting those appetites that you hope to get to heaven? Tell me, you sinful woman, do you expect by your vanity, your immodest dress, your lascivious reading and idle gossip, to save your soul? Tell me, you young people, if your consciences are seared with the scars of passion, if your virtue is tarnished by laziness or profanity or indecent talk, if impurity is eating away your souls or rotting your bodies, tell me, are these things making for your eternal salvation? You know what the Apostle says, that neither ‘the unjust nor idolaters nor fornicators nor the avaricious nor the covetous nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of God.’ Not heaven but hell is the end of sin. If you live in sin, you will die in sin, and he who dies in sin will be buried with his sin in hell. Infallible Truth tells us this. There is no escape. ‘As the tree falls, so shall it lie.’ Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?”

Your end, sin, and its consequences—these are the fundamental truths that should occupy the Catholic mind during the Lenten season to help you realize anew your relations to God and your responsibility, to know where you have gone astray and why. Lent is like a great mission, not for one parish only or even for a city, but for the whole Catholic world, when Holy Mother the Church exhorts her children to think over the past, to examine the present, and to provide for the future.

What is my past? Have I been serving God or Mammon?

And how do I stand today? In whose camp am I in the great battle for souls, Christ's or Lucifer's? Is my soul the temple of the Holy Ghost and adorned with sanctifying grace, or scarred with sin? Am I a Catholic in deed or in name only? Am I a credit to God and the Church, or a disgrace? What is my attitude towards daily prayer and Sunday Mass and the sacraments? When I am unfortunate enough to commit mortal sin, do I quickly repent and try to win back God's friendship, or do I live on carelessly in sin, tempting God's providence to cut me off in my sin and damn my soul to hell?

And what about the future? How are you securing yourself? Are you ready to die tonight? I don't say do you want to die, but are you ready? You know what Christ says, that "death will come like a thief in the night," and it is of this the Church reminds you on Ash Wednesday when she blesses the ashes.

Do you realize that more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons pass out of this world each day? Do you realize that in your very city there are men and women who have not twenty-four hours to live—nay, who this very night will appear before the bar of Divine Justice to give a strict account of twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years of their past life employed perhaps in every other affair but that of their eternal salvation—men and women, some of whom will hear those awful words: "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire"?

"Depart from Me, your Creator, who loved you with an everlasting love, who called you out of nothingness and made you to My own image, who alone can make you happy and satisfy the cravings of your thirsty soul. I gave you life and talents and opportunities, and you abused them. Depart from Me, your Redeemer, who left heaven for you and toiled and moiled and suffered for you, who was spat upon and scourged and crowned and crucified for you. Depart from Me, your gracious Friend. I warned you, and you sinned knowingly and maliciously. I forgave you time and again, and time and again you went back to your sin. I fed you My Body and Blood, and you scorned them. I gave you My Church and the sacraments, and you profaned them. I generously lavished My graces upon you, and you squandered them. I gave you the Faith and Catholic parents and a good education, and, despite all My friendship and all My love, you would not be saved. Depart from Me; I know you not. With the Jews,

you preferred Barabbas to Me; you preferred your sinful pleasures to My behests, your will to My commandments, the siren's voice to Mine; you preferred human respect to duty; gluttony and debauchery to temperance and self-restraint. Depart from My company and that of My Mother Mary and My angels and saints. Depart from heaven and all its peace and rest and joy, into the unquenchable fires of hell with all its torments and remorse and pain. Depart with the eternal curse of God your Father upon you, cursed in body and cursed in soul." Oh, it is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God and go down to the bottomless pit, for out of hell there is no redemption! "It is appointed for all men once to die and after death the judgment," and we cannot make a liar of the Holy Ghost.

Such thoughts as these are solemn, but they are wholesome. They filled a David, a Job, a St. Jerome with holy fear. St. Francis Borgia used to meditate every day on the pains of hell, for he felt that, if he went down into that awful place in spirit during life, he would never go down there in reality after death. "Remember thy last end," says Scripture, "and thou wilt never sin." No man who realized fully that after sin he might be plunged into the fires of hell for all eternity, would dare to glut his anger, to satisfy his revenge, to pamper his body, and for a few moments' satisfaction incur the anger of God; no such man would dare, if he were conscious that a mortal sin was on his soul, remain in that state one night—yea, one hour. The risk is too great.

For what assures the sinner that the thread of his life will not be snapped? Is God obligated to him? Neither age, nor health, nor beauty, nor wealth can stave off the ghastly hand of death when life's appointed span is run.

Such thoughts as these, my brethren, are the truths you should turn your attention to, if you really want Lent to be profitable. They are not meant to sadden or frighten you—for the message of Lent is a message of peace and holy joy—but to show you in a business-like way just where you stand in the great matter of your salvation.

Make a good resolution to spend Lent well. By a more public profession of your Faith and a more careful observance of God's commandments, let the world know that it means something for you to be a Catholic at this time. Show, too, that you appreciate the opportunity God is giving you to set the house of your soul in order. Who knows but this may be the last? Who knows but God has prepared during this Lenten season the graces upon which your whole eternity will depend? Many who were alive last Lent are now dead; some of them perhaps are in hell because they did not spend that Lent well. God is good, but man cannot mock His goodness or trifle with His justice.

Today then, when you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts. And, realizing your own weakness, ask our Divine Lord to help you. Ask Him to make you strong to conquer passion, to practise virtue, and live nobly.

Today Holy Mother the Church interprets the handwriting on the wall for you as a warning to make this a time of penance and prayer and earnest thoughtfulness. The thoughts may be serious, but there is only one thing that can make them terrible; that is mortal sin. Let your first Lenten resolution then be: no more mortal sin! And, if you are in sin, do not forget that the Sacred Heart yearns to pardon you. Only lift up your eyes to the crucifix and throw yourself contritely at the feet of your Saviour, and, though your sins be as numerous as the sands of the sea-shore or as scarlet as the blood-drenched battlefields, have confidence that they shall be wiped out and forgiven. This is still the hour of mercy and pardon. Tomorrow? There may be no tomorrow. "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."

## II

### WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CATHOLIC

**L**ENT comes each year to the Catholic Christian as a heavenly messenger charged with a great message. But though the burden of that message is always the same, that we have not here a lasting city but are made for God, still, as the Divine wisdom is infinite, it comes year by year in newer different forms suited to our varying social and individual needs.

Today, if I read the signs of the times aright and gauge correctly the sentiment of our public press and platform, the call is for a higher standard of Catholicism amongst us. For, as one looks abroad in the land and contemplates the appalling spectacle of irreligion and ungodliness and materialism in so many quarters, it is only too evident that religion alone—and the Catholic religion at that—is the leaven pervading the whole mass of our people; and the conviction is forced upon the serious thinker that Catholic men and Catholic women to whom their Faith means more than Sunday Mass and Easter Communion, are the urgent need of the times.

Now, it is an admitted fact that, in proportion as we appreciate a person, an object or a purpose, in

such proportion will that person, object or purpose engage our attention and influence our lives. In the recent world catastrophe we had an apt illustration of this. Commentators on the War, friend and foe alike of Germany, almost unanimously admit that the secret of her tremendous endurance and her first successes was the conviction inbred in the nation of the glory and grandeur of the German Empire. Through a training that extended over well-nigh three generations, an appreciation of national excellence had been drilled into the people till every citizen felt proud of his country, his government and his flag, and for its well-being and prosperity he was ready to sacrifice on the altar of patriotism his wealth, his comforts, even life itself.

When our own country awoke to the necessity of a more universal Americanism, she too found that the shortest and surest method to make her foreign-born population more appreciative of their opportunities and more eager for citizenship was by acquainting the masses with the sublimity of the principles for which democracy stands, the grandeur of the American Constitution, and the advantages the United States offers for material prosperity and success.

Coming nearer home, is it not each one's daily experience that his own keen appreciation of the value of money and of the importance of wealth for comfortable living is the measure of his earnestness in its pursuit and his thriftiness in its retention?

Advisedly then, to stimulate a higher standard of

Catholicism, let us turn our attention during the rest of our Lenten conferences to a consideration of some of the glories of the Catholic Church in the hope that a better realization of what being a citizen in the Catholic commonwealth means, may beget more enthusiasm for our religion and give it a more permanent and vital influence in the relations of our daily lives.

The first glory of our religion is the fact that the constitution upon which it is builded is Divine, that Catholicism is the only true religion.

Is it not a glorious thing, my brethren, for you and for me that we can stand up before the world and in bold defiance say to Paganism and Judaism and Protestantism: "You are false; I have the truth." St. Paul felt proud as he stood before the Governor Festus and was able to say: "I am a Roman citizen," for it was a great thing in those days to be a Roman. We, thanks to the grace of God, can feel more proud to say: "I am a Catholic." We can say that and look the world unflinchingly in the eye, for Catholicism stands for the pillar and ground of truth, the one Church of Christ barring none built upon a rock, infallible, indefectible, and characterized by a unity, sanctity, universality and antiquity that no other religion on the face of the globe can justly claim as a right or establish as a fact.

Mind, we are not speaking of individuals, for they are accountable to their consciences and to God for their good or bad faith; but of their religion, what-

ever it be—Shintoism or Buddhism, Judaism or Protestantism in any of its forms—we say unqualifiedly that they are false.

Is the Catholic Church the true Church, the true religion? Let us see.

In the first place, as for Paganism and Judaism and all non-Christian sects, with the Divinity of Christ established, their claims to truth must fall, for one and all they reject Him. But is Christ God? Nothing is more indisputable.

To assure ourselves that Washington was once President of the United States or Charlemagne King of the Franks or Cæsar Augustus Emperor of Rome, as sane men we merely inquire if there be any authentic historical evidence to show that they respectively claimed those dignities, or exercised the prerogatives of those offices, or were acknowledged as rulers by their contemporaries.

Now, apply this same test to Christ, and, unless we wish to throw reason out of court, must we not as logically conclude that He is Divine? Take the New Testament, I care not what version; take it, too, merely as an historical document (and even those who deny its inspiration must admit its historical value); open it at random; you will find everywhere that Jesus Christ arrogates to Himself Divine nature and Divine attributes—eternity, omniscience and omnipotence; that He justifies those claims by using that Divine power and that Divine knowledge to utter a long series of prophecies and perform a variety of stupendous miracles culminating in His

own glorious resurrection from the dead, and that in spite of themselves His very foes acknowledged those claims. Coming down from Calvary, even at the moment when Christ hung dead upon the cross, did not the Roman centurion strike his breast and say: "Truly, this was the Son of God"? And fifty days later, on Pentecost Sunday, did not the Jews to the number of at least three thousand, in compunction for the awful deicide of Good Friday, accept the preaching of the Apostles? And a few days later were these not followed by several thousand more?

The sincerity of Christ's character, the holiness of His life, the sublimity of His doctrine, His prophecies, His wonders, all attest the Divinity of His Person and His work. Did ever man speak as Christ spoke? Did ever man act as He acted, and do the things that He did? If proud minds will not yield assent, Christianity has no more cogent arguments to offer. It was to these evidences He Himself appealed. "The works themselves," He says, "which I do, give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent Me." Yes, Christ is Divine, and, with His Divinity established, Paganism and Judaism fall.

Equally clear is the fact that Christ founded a Church and established a religion of some sort. All so-called Christian denominations admit it. On this point Catholics are not at loggerheads with them. The question is: Where is Christ's Church today? Where? Is Catholicism His religion, or Lutheranism, or Calvinism, or Methodism, or Presbyterian-

ism, or Anglicanism, or Episcopalianism, or the Rollers or Shakers or the Salvation Army? They all call themselves Christian, but, mind, Christ could not have founded them all, for no two agree even about fundamentals, and the truth cannot be contradictory. Catholicism, for example, justifies infant baptism; other sects deny its efficacy. Catholicism postulates seven sacraments; the rest of the so-called Christian sects reject in whole or in part the sacramental system. Catholicism honors Mary as the Virgin Mother of God; Protestantism denies her this prerogative, and calls that honor blasphemy. Catholicism supposes the Papacy and a priesthood and a sacrifice essential to the religion of Christ; practically all the Protestant denominations reject those things as human institutions.

Our proposition is that Christ founded the Roman Catholic Church (we add the word Roman because certain hybrid denominations have unlawfully usurped the title Catholic), and that she alone is the pillar and ground of truth.

During Our Lord's public career, as you will remember, He chose from among His faithful followers twelve to be particularly associated with Him in the organization of His kingdom the Church, and to them shortly before His ascension he gave the sublime commission to go into the world and continue His saving work. "Going therefore," he said, "teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I

have taught you. And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

Some time before in unmistakable language recorded in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel, He had made Peter the Head of that little band—Peter to whom at the very outset of His public career, as St. Matthew tells us, He solemnly promised: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. To you will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven."

Even a very cursory examination of those texts indicates very plainly that Christ's Church was to have certain characteristics or marks by which it might easily be distinguished from every other religious body. In fact, apart from any formal statement that had to be so. Christ's purpose was to save all, and His religion was to be a necessary means for the salvation of all. Time and again He had announced most emphatically that, if men did not accept His teaching and enter the fold of which He was the Pastor and the kingdom of which He was the Ruler, they could not hope to reach heaven. He would oblige all to obey His laws. He would oblige all to hear His Church which embodies those laws. In justice, then, He had to make that Church easily discernible from all others, and readily recognizable even by the most unlettered.

Every Catholic child knows what the marks of

the Church are. Christ's Church must, in the first place, have unity—unity in government, for “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand,” and unity in faith, for Scripture (which an honest man may not juggle), Revelation (which no Christian can deny), and reason (which everyone must follow) all declare that the true Church of Christ must always and everywhere proclaim the same doctrine. Its teaching must be uniform and immutable, with nothing of the original deposit lost, nor one jot or tittle added. Christ's teachers are to teach all things whatsoever He taught them, nothing more and nothing less.

Now, consider for a moment the marvelous unity of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in this twentieth century when freedom of thought on every important question makes it so difficult to bring even a few persons together in harmony. Behold, in a world full of dissension, two hundred and seventy millions and more of Catholic Christians thinking exactly alike about the most abstract, the most sublime things. And this Faith in which they are united was professed before them by millions upon millions of others long since laid away in their graves. They participate in the same sacraments and in unison offer the same Holy Sacrifice, and finally they all profess allegiance to the one only legitimate successor of the glorious St. Peter. And what makes this unity all the more wonderful is, that on every other point—in language, in race, in political systems, in social views, in educational policies, in culture, in material

progress—they stand divided. Why, this alone is almost miracle enough to prove the Divine institution of the Catholic Church.

I ask you, which of the other Christian denominations has this unity? Calvinism or Presbyterianism or Lutheranism or Anglicanism? Which of these even claims—let alone actually has—an authoritative teaching body that can definitely and categorically declare and in such a way as to carry conviction and gain the adherence of its members, this is right, that other is wrong, this is true, that other is false? In the very same sect you will find High churchmen and Low churchmen. From the very same pulpit you will find ministers advocating and teaching the most contrary doctrines and on the most fundamental matters of Christianity—the indissolubility of the marriage tie, the existence of hell, the Real Presence, and so on.

Even collectively, have the Protestant sects unity? Yes, they have a unity, but it is not that unity of Faith or of government which Christ established in His Church. They are united in one thing alone—in fighting the Catholic Church and the Papacy, but, because she has the truth, because she is built upon the rock of Peter and not upon shifting sands, because she has the Divine promise that error and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, she stands triumphant over all their united attacks, as fresh and vigorous and glorious today as on the beautiful morning when Christ made Peter His Vicar.

Christ's religion was to be one. It was also from

its purpose, its doctrine, and its Founder to be holy and to effect the sanctification of its members.

Is the Catholic Church holy? My brethren, our own consciences bear witness that, if each one of us is not a saint, it is because we have neglected the teachings of that Church, and disregarded the means she offers to purify our souls and unite ourselves to God—prayer and the sacraments. Through Baptism the Church consecrates us to God at the very outset of life. From infancy she teaches her little ones to praise and love God, Christ, His Mother and the saints. She affords them strength to live rightly through the Holy Eucharist, as anyone who follows her suggestions may experience. When they do wander from the path of righteousness, she restores them to grace through Confession. And, as she helps them to live holily, so she helps them to die holily. From the cradle to the grave—aye and beyond the tomb when her children are going through the last awful purgation in the cleansing fires of Purgatory—the Church with motherly solicitude is striving her utmost to fit her members to take their places in that holy of holies where nothing defiled may enter.

Oh, how well she succeeds! How many saints does the Church number! Behold the stars in the sky. Some shine forth especially bright, but behind them in the depths of the universe where we only notice a feeble glimmer of light there are myriads of others. And thus it is in the starry firmament of Christianity; to the front are the saints of the first rank, Mary, Joseph, the Apostles, but round about

them that "great crowd which no man can number from every race and tribe and tongue," their heroism visibly attested by most astounding miracles.

Holiness! Where are the saints of Protestantism? Where are the miracles of Protestantism—for miracles are God's seal on holiness? Mind again, we do not say that there are not very many excellent non-Catholic Christians. But does Protestantism make them good, or is it in spite of Protestantism? Can religions founded in pride and sensuality make saints? Saints are not made of that stuff! If Lutheranism could not make Luther a saint, or Calvinism make a saint of Calvin, or Anglicanism throw a halo about the licentious Henry VIII—if the high-priests are rotten, what shall we expect for those who trust in them? "A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit." It is a question of the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into the pit.

You are the children of the saints, and you may justly be proud of your lineage. Yours is the common Faith of an Augustine, an Aquinas, a Dominic, a Benedict, a Francis, a Patrick, an Ignatius, a St. Paul, an Agnes, a Cecilia, a Bridget, a Theresa, a Joan of Arc. Yours is the common Faith of the Immaculate Mother of God herself, the Queen of Saints. And that Faith gives you a right to glory, and that right is the greater, the closer your lives are modeled on the magnificent examples they have left you.

Christ commissioned His Apostles to teach all nations and He promised to be with them in that work

till the end of time. Hence, the true Christian religion was to be Catholic, which is a word of Greek origin meaning "universal."

The Christian religion was to be universal in time and place. The universality of your Church is too patent to need any lengthy proof. You are familiar with the story of her growth—how, like the mustard seed of the Gospel, starting in Jerusalem she has spread her branches over land and sea and taken root in all climes, and this in spite of the awful persecutions she has endured, of the difficulties she has had to surmount, of attacks from without and treachery from within. Today she is literally established in every portion of the globe. Christ came to save all. His Church must labor for all. The Catholic Church, and she alone, does this. Protestant and Jew and Gentile—everyone does she strive to win over to her that there may be but one fold and one shepherd. Rich and poor, king and pauper, black and white and red skin—for all is the Catholic Church solicitous, and this is the real spirit of Christ.

How widespread is Protestantism? Are not the leading sects rather national religions? How many Anglicans are to be found outside the English-speaking peoples? How many Lutherans who have not a tinge of German blood? If these sects do undertake a limited amount of missionary work, is it not oftener to offset Catholic efforts than to gain souls to Christ? Do not the tactics of Protestants in Italy and the South American Republics prove this? What efforts are Protestants making to convert the Jews?

Yet, if they have the true religion, this should be part of their explicit program.

But the religion founded by Jesus Christ was to be universal, not merely in geographic extent, but in time as well. Historically, the first of our contemporary sects, the Anabaptists, was founded in Germany in 1521. A few years later came Lutheranism. Then Anglicanism or Episcopalianism, all talk about the branch-theory and all attempts to link up those denominations with the Faith of the early Catholic English bishops to the contrary notwithstanding. Where were these sects for sixteen centuries before? They do not go back to Christ. They cannot be His Church.

And this leads to a word about the last mark that should characterize the true Christian religion. As it exists today, it should be linked up with Apostolic times. It was to the Apostles and their legitimate successors only that our Blessed Lord promised His presence till the end of time. The succession of our Catholic priests and bishops is historically undeniable. Even adverse critics admit it. From Pius XI now gloriously reigning, the procession of Popes goes back through an unbroken succession of two hundred and sixty Pontiffs to the Prince of the Apostles, Peter, to whom Christ said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Our argument, I believe, is finished. Yet, the glory behind it is only touched upon. Catholicism alone bears the earmarks of the religion founded by

Christ. Catholicism alone is Christ's religion. Catholicism alone is the true religion.

"Oh, good God, I thank Thee that I am a Catholic. I thank Thee that I belong to that Church that has unity of doctrine and of government; that is holy and can make me holy; that knows no national bounds, but is spread the world over, and whose priests and bishops can trace their lineal sacerdotal descent through the Apostles and St. Peter to Thine own Divine Son!"

Oh, let us be grateful that the Founder of the Faith we profess was in very truth Jesus Christ, the God-Man. The foundation stone on which our religion is built is no fallen monk or profligate king. God does not ordinarily make such men His ministers. Our Faith is a precious inheritance. Let us hold firm to it. Remember that, though no power on earth or in hell can rob you of that Faith unless you yourself deliberately will it, still it can be lost, and so you must safeguard it with eternal vigilance.

Live up to your Faith. Keep its traditions and glory in them, secure in the conviction that it is built upon the rock of Peter, the rock of ages, the rock against which all the fury of hell has been dashing for nineteen hundred years, but which has not budged. "Jesus Christ," says St. Paul, "is the same yesterday, today and forever." And oh, my brethren, His Church is also the same yesterday, today and forever. In blunt American language, she has been on the job for nineteen hundred years, and she will be there till the crack of doom. This is our Church,

your Church and my Church, the pillar and ground of truth, the infallible Church, the authoritative Church, the Church that fears not to say to any man: "Thus far shalt thou go and no further"—the Church that despite persecution is honored among the nations and by civil powers, the Church one and unchangeable because Divine, the Holy Roman Catholic Church founded by Jesus Christ, subject to no man but only to God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, to serve whom is to reign.

### III

## THE CATHOLIC IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

OF the many grave dangers facing our nation to-day, admittedly the gravest is the instability that has grown up about the home-life of our people. The marked increase amongst us in recent years of evils that militate against the sacredness of the home, makes earnest men who have the welfare of the country at heart pause and take notice. Students of history, they know that, wherever the family has been tampered with, there national ruin has followed, and it takes no prophetic spirit to assure them that, unless some improvement sets in, their own country is doomed.

And, if the danger is alarming even from the angle of the statesman, what dreadful proportions does it not assume when looked at from the viewpoint of religion? Every attack on the sanctity of the home is a mortal offense against the infinite holiness of God. Accordingly, the home has become the great rallying point towards which both churchmen and statesmen are directing their attention. To the credit of the Catholic Church be it said that, in her attitude towards the problem, serious-minded thinkers find the ideal solution of the difficulty. This is another

of Catholicism's great glories, a new motive for every individual Catholic to be proud of his religion, and it is to this that we shall direct our present remarks.

The Christian home! Only the Catholic Church authoritatively proclaims what it should be, unflinchingly safeguards it against the enemies that threaten it, and gives men and women the means to make its ideal not an idle dream but a living reality.

You all know what Catholic theology teaches about the home and marriage. Before you were old enough to understand the nature of matrimony, you saw that ideal practically worked out in the domestic relations of your own Christian fathers and mothers. Marriage for them was a sacred thing, a sacramental bond that united them together in a union one and indissoluble—for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, in health, till death should them part.

It was a simple thing, yet of tremendous import. Attracted towards each other not by lust for wealth or social position or the baser gratification of some shameful passion, but by a mutual affection in holy harmony with their nature, one day they stood at God's altar and pledged their undying troth to each other, and, with heaven's blessing upon them and fortified by the special graces they there received, they went forth from God's temple happy and brave to face the future with its joys and its sorrows, its roses and its thorns. They went forth of set purpose to be a mutual help one to the other, and to

rear a family that would be the consolation of their declining years—to rear sons and daughters to whom they might bequeath, if not the good things of earth, at least an honorable name and an abundance of family traditions; sons and daughters who, when the old folks should lie side by side in the quiet churchyard, would perpetuate their name and their virtues and their Faith.

Their home may have been poor, but it was always home. Sickness and suffering and even want may have been familiar visitors, but there was always peace and contentment—the husband industrious, sober and devoted, his happiness after the day's work centering about his wife and later the little ones the Lord blessed them with; the wife gentle, patient, hardworking, her greatest care her little household, intent on making life pleasant for her dear ones; the children a merry, happy throng of God's own angels growing up in mutual affection and helpfulness!

This was the home, my brethren, we knew years ago. It was the common home of our Catholic people, the home where God was feared and loved, where family prayer had a place, where the images of the Sacred Heart and the Crucified and the Immaculate Virgin were honored and revered, and where we little ones were taught to look to them for strength and inspiration. It was the home where playmates were carefully selected, and refinement and virtue went hand in hand with poverty and suffering.

There may have been passing disagreements in that home. At times there may even have been serious sins, for to err is human. But always the marriage itself was sacred, and home was ever the sweet place of which the poet sang. It was the Christian home that found its prototype in the little cottage that centuries before had nestled in the foothills of Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph dwelt in happy concord, and where the God-Man passed most of His time on earth. How beautiful the Galilean picture as we turn back the years and gaze on it in loving contemplation! There is the ideal home. Poverty is there, it is true, and Joseph is a humble toiler and Mary an anxious housewife; but there we find always quiet and happiness, and all the relations that each member had to God, his neighbor and the others, are admirably harmonized and blended. On this holy household of Nazareth our own homes, thanks be to God, were modeled, and this even as late as a generation ago was the practical working out of the Catholic teaching about marriage.

For the Church, marriage is a solemn contract supernaturalized by the Divine touch of Our Blessed Lord. In the beginning, before the ages, only God existed, the one God in three Divine Persons. In time the world was made, and, to stamp creation with the closest resemblance to that Trinity, man was made to the Divine image. As Scripture magnificently unfolds the story: "To the image of God He created man; male and female He created them; and God blessed them saying, 'Increase and mul-

tiply.' " Thus, the human family was formed to reproduce the sublime Exemplar after which it had been fashioned. The father, the mother, the child—that was to be the human trinity.

The grandeur and holiness of the family rest on foundations erected by the hand of God. No man can touch those foundations without unsettling them. Nay more: as the human family was fashioned by God, so in God must the laws that govern it be sought. That union is essentially stable and irrevocable. From the first, it was to be one and indissoluble, for, as we read in Genesis, "a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." Again, there was to be authority in that family group, the wife subject to the husband but not his slave, the children subject to both. Finally, all were to be reciprocally united by a mutual and undying love.

And there were obligations and duties, too, in that primitive state, and these might not be shirked. Instituted for the three-fold purpose of propagating the human race, of securing the mutual happiness of the husband and wife, and of educating the offspring, neither husband nor wife might by a guilty abuse of their powers frustrate the Divine purpose. They might not be blind to the respect and love and confidence due their helpmate. They might not criminally neglect the physical or moral well-being of their little ones, or omit to train them to be useful to themselves and society in life and to fit them for citizenship in the eternal kingdom of heaven.

Such was God's original plan for marriage and the family. From the beginning, He was to be the third party to the marriage contract, giving it its sacred character. But, like all God's institutions for man, in time it was abused, till Jesus Christ who came to restore the kingdom of God on earth restored marriage, too, to its original sublime dignity. He did more. He ordained that thereafter the power of His redeeming Blood should flow in upon that contract and He made it one of the seven mysterious channels of regenerating grace. This is why the State may not legislate about the substance of the marriage contract between Christians. It may indeed determine its purely civil effects as the law of inheritance and property rights, but beyond that it may not go. It may not say that a ceremony between Catholics before a civil magistrate suffices for a true conjugal bond, nor may it stigmatize a sacramental marriage merely because some legal formality has been omitted.

But, when Christ restored matrimony to its original unity and indissolubility and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, He did not change depraved human nature, and from that day to this, though there have been millions of homes where the Christian ideal of marriage has been realized, Catholicism has always had to be alert lest vicious principles that might undermine domestic life should pervert the hearts even of the Faithful. She fought those principles in pagan Greece and Rome and conquered; she fought those principles among the barbarian hordes

that swept over Europe from the sixth to the ninth centuries and conquered; and today, thanks to the Protestant revolt of the sixteenth century, the struggle still goes on.

Today three glaring evils threaten the sanctity of the home, the great rallying point of the nation. They may not be passed over in silence. For, unfortunately, the appearance of respectability which wealth and social position, a loose press, a licentious stage and a debased literature have thrown about them creates a grave danger that vice may lose its hideousness and our Catholic ideals become dimmed, and crimes that the holiness of God abhors and punishes unmercifully may come at length to be—if not approved by us as virtuous—either condoned as a necessity or complacently tolerated. Between the Catholic and these evils—I refer to adultery, divorce and birth control—there can be, there must be, no compromise, for the law of God, the law of Nature, the law of Christ, all forbid them.

I need not remind you how heinous marital infidelity is, containing the double malice of injustice and impurity. And, yet, its defenders are numerous. One meets them at every turn. The wife finds its advocates among her women friends, and comes across them in the novels she reads and the plays she witnesses. The husband does not have to look for them. In fact, he often looks in vain for the upholders of right and duty. Even when his married life is happy, he frequently has hard work to maintain his fidelity amid the raillery and banter of

his friends. It is so old-fashioned, so out-of-date in this age of free love and self-expression. And how much more keen is the temptation when married life is not happy, when passion within craves satisfaction, when everywhere about there are the crafty seductions of the world, or when conscience is blinded by some disappointment to the line of duty?

"Must I be faithful?" one asks. "And why, if I no longer love? Why, if I am no longer loved? Why, if I love another? Why, when love is departed from the heart and hatred is there?" Why, my friends? Because your plighted troth demands it. Because, O man, you made a solemn promise to the bride you led to the altar on your wedding day. Because, O woman, you have sworn loyalty to your husband, and you have promised to be his alone till death. Why, my brethren? Because it is God's law—that is why. When the Almighty thundered forth the Divine prohibition on Mount Sinai: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," He had no intention to be mocked. He has a sanction for that law, and it is terrible. Man cannot trifle with God. God loved David, who was king over God's chosen people; God loved Solomon, and had bestowed on him His choicest gifts. Yet both fell, and history tells us with what heavy chastisements His inexorable justice visited their awful sins. Between this vice, then, and Christ's followers there can be nothing in common. The law is absolute: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

So too is the law forbidding divorce. I mean that

loosing of the marriage bond which affects to allow the separated parties to remarry. What God hath joined together no human power may put asunder. And O, how many tears and how much blood has insistence on this precept cost Holy Mother the Church! Was not John the Baptist, the Precursor of our Divine Lord, a martyr to the sacredness of this truth? He alone dared reprehend the Tetrarch Herod for his incestuous marriage with Herodias. What a noble figure he makes, as he stands out boldly and says: "It is not lawful for thee to take thy brother's wife," though the words signed his life away! For you remember how, to gratify the dancing Salome and her wicked mother, Herod in the midst of his birthday revelry ordered the Baptist's head struck off.

And through the ages Christ's Vicars have never shone more gloriously than when vindicating against unprincipled monarchs the absolute indissolubility of the marriage tie. Witness how in the sixteenth century, when the licentious Henry VIII would divorce his lawful spouse to contract an adulterous alliance, the restraining hand of Christ's Vicar was raised in solemn protest, though it cost the Church the favor of that powerful king, and brought on English Catholics an awful and bloody persecution whose effects after three centuries are not yet fully healed. And, when the imperious Napoleon would wring from a later Pontiff the annulment of his brother's marriage, was it not another glorious triumph for Catholicism and a vindication of the sacredness of

marriage when Pius VII replied: "I may not. I will not."

Protestantism begot in modern times divorce. To-day the world is reaping its appalling consequences. In the United States the evil has spread within a generation with alarming rapidity. It has permeated every walk of society, and is prevalent among every class of people. A few years ago we had twice as many divorces in this country as in all Christendom combined.

It is a sad commentary on the decadence of morals and the lowering of ideals in our times that divorced people who are remarried are so commonly respected. Time was when they were socially ostracized. Time was when a Catholic woman would not admit a divorced person to a social gathering, and never to her table. Time was when a Catholic lawyer would not handle a divorce case. Time was when a respectable journal would not report one. Today, how changed! Our daily papers teem with filthy accounts of divorce scandals; our American people—sad to say, even our Catholics—feed upon such news, and they allow their children to feed upon such news, husks fit only for swine. And then we wonder why our boys and girls look lightly on their purity, why they look lightly on their homes, why they are fast losing all respect for their elders.

We have penitentiaries for thieves and burglars and embezzlers; we have pest-houses for the plague-stricken. We consider them a danger to the community and a stain upon the fair name of the com-

monwealth. Yet, though divorced and remarried people are moral lepers more to be dreaded than those afflicted with contagious physical diseases, hundreds, aye thousands, of them stalk abroad our public streets, and not only are they not shunned, but we Catholics lock arms with them in social intercourse, we welcome them indiscriminately to our homes—yea, some Catholic mothers will allow their daughters to keep company with divorced men. And all because a decadent world, in open conflict with the Divine law, puts its approval on their illicit relations. Ignorance may excuse some of them—let us hope it does. But, from the viewpoint of Catholic doctrine, the remarriage of divorced people is nothing less than legalized concubinage.

What shall stem the tide? The State? You can not legislate the people to morality. Religion? Yes, religion, but not Protestantism, because divorce is its viperous offspring, and its opinions about the problem are divided. Only absolute, inflexible adherence to the Divine law will solve the problem, and only the Catholic Church holds the key of the situation: "What God hath joined together, no human power may put asunder!"

The Catholic Church, then, is the one effective bulwark against adultery and divorce. She too is the only force on earth to withstand race suicide and birth restriction, which is the third contemporary evil militating against the great rallying point of the nation and the sacredness of the Christian home. She alone, also, is the earnest advocate of the right

of the unborn child to life—a right, be it said to the shame of the American people, that there seems to be no effective legislation to protect.

Outside the Catholic Church, the advocates of birth control are legion, and actual infanticide is not at all uncommon. On the flimsiest pretexts, from the most selfish motives, men and women unscrupulously indulge in practices that their parents would have blushed even to mention, and that would put to shame the pagans of ancient Greece and Rome. What is worse is that the pernicious doctrine is influencing our Catholic people. Even some of them make no secret of the fact that they do not want children, that they are a burden, that the cost of supporting them is high, that they are a physical and economical drain on their resources.

We deplore the cruelty of the tyrant who slew the little ones around Bethlehem, when he sought the life of the Infant Saviour. But what about the slaughter of the innocents going on right in our very midst? Men call the Chinese mother brutal, because she exposes her new-born baby daughter to perish in a public gutter. Yet, these same men palliate and excuse—aye, force and encourage—the no less heinous sins of their American wives and daughters.

Where, I ask, is their faith? Have they forgotten the sacred purpose of marriage? Have they forgotten what it means to rear a child that will glorify God for all eternity? Have they forgotten the value of a human soul? Have they forgotten that their bad will and their worse practices are so many chal-

lenges to Almighty God to take from their homes even the little ones they have? And yet how reluctantly would they give them up! Continency is a Christian virtue, and married people are free to exercise it; but one may not use marriage, and then with impunity deliberately frustrate God's purpose. I say nothing of the danger to the commonwealth from birth control and abortion, but let those who dare provoke God's wrath by their abominable vices remember that He will have His day. The mills of the gods, the proverb says, grind slowly. But none the less they grind surely. Christ says: "Permit the little children to come to Me," and selfish parents say: "We will not." Oh, how hard will be their judgment! Deservedly, unless they repent, will they hear that awful sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . . for what you did to the least of these My brethren you did unto Me." Their unborn babes will rise up in judgment against their selfishness and their pride and their lust.

Catholic men and women, let all your marriage relations be holy. Trust Divine Providence. The economic dangers from large families are altogether over-estimated. If Our Heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea and clothes the lilies of the field with a glory that even Solomon with all his grandeur had not, will He not amply provide for His Catholic men and women who, to observe His law, banish the awful vices which I have been discussing out of their lives?

Here I would sound a note of warning to our

young Catholic people, who have still to make the all-important choice of a partner for life, for, in the matter of forming engagements, there are fundamental dangers that must not be overlooked. Marriage is a most serious step, and you must be keenly alive to the responsibility you are taking upon yourselves. It must not be entered into thoughtlessly or inadvisedly, or from mere whim or passion. If there was ever a moment in your lives when you need help, it is at this critical time. Consult your parents, who of all people on earth have your best interests at heart, and whom God has given you as your natural advisers in this matter. Consult, too, your confessors who have the eternal salvation of your souls dearly at heart. Thus, your company-keeping will be absolutely aboveboard, and will have upon it the blessing of both your parents and Almighty God. Never keep company with a divorced person.

Above all, let me insist on one point. What follows may sound hard, but to give offense is farthest from my thoughts. But I am addressing Catholics who, I trust, believe that their Faith is the one true religion, who are convinced that it is their dearest treasure, who would rejoice as their forefathers did to shed their last drop of blood for it, and whose value none but they can know. Much as I esteem the multitude of our non-Catholic neighbors whose lives are models of social and domestic virtues, I say most unreservedly: in Christ's name marry no one but a Catholic; marry no one but one of your own Faith.

Once more, this is no reflection upon your non-Catholic friends, much less on any Catholics who may have married one not of their religion, or who may be the offspring of such a marriage. The Church for grave reasons sometimes permits mixed marriages. Still, she does it reluctantly, and never blesses such a union with her sacred rites, and, as sad experience proves, with comparatively rare exceptions they are a fatal folly.

I care not how good, how virtuous, how anything else your intended non-Catholic partner may be. He or she can never make you completely happy, for where there is discord of hearts and minds on that which should be the chief concern of life, God, there never can be real mutual peace and happiness. The practice of your own religion, even under the most favorable conditions, is bound to be hampered. And what of the children? Side by side they have two examples of religion before them, and is this not apt to bring on religious indifference? It matters not that the non-Catholic party does not interfere. Both father and mother should be positive helps to the children in practising their religion. And the Catholic parent may die, and then what becomes of the children's faith?

This problem of mixed marriages is a serious problem, but it is all a delusion and a snare. Every experienced priest has known disappointed Catholic partners to such unions to weep out their very eyes in useless regrets. For God's sake, then, never marry save one of your own Faith. If you are keeping

company with a non-Catholic, explain your position candidly, or, better still, get him or her to talk it over with your pastor. The latter will be able to make the logic of your position clear to any person who is sincere; and if he or she is all you think at heart, God will certainly give the gift of Faith. If He does not, consider it a warning that His fatherly Providence is giving you; and, as you love your soul and your happiness both here and hereafter, drop the person out of your life. It may cause you keen anguish, but better a moment's pain before marriage than a life of remorse afterwards. Be sure, too, that Almighty God will amply repay any sacrifice you make to safeguard your holy Faith.

The old standards are radically changing. The beautiful happy family life our ancestors knew is fast becoming only a page in history. In this twentieth century marriage is mostly entered into in haste, its obligations lightly assumed and as lightly cast aside. Passion and greed, not love and sacrifice, are at the base of most of our unions. And then, even when the final chapter is not told in the divorce courts, what have we? Not homes but apartments and boarding-houses, a place to sleep in, that is all; not gentle mothers and industrious, God-fearing fathers, but social butterflies and unholy partners.

In many of our so-called homes what will you find elevating, what ennobling? How often must the priest when he takes the Viaticum to the dying apologize to Our Eucharistic Lord for the places to which he brings Him? It is not because they are

poor. There is no disgrace in poverty. But it is because the atmosphere is so worldly. Why, often there is not even an image of Christ crucified in the room, and the pictures of the Sacred Heart and Our Blessed Lady that our good old fathers and mothers loved so tenderly are relegated to the scrap-heap to give place to posters of athletic stars or movie actresses—or, worse still, even shameful nudities, because they pass for art.

Again, what amusements are indulged in? Where are the evening prayers in common? Why, who stays home at all at night? And who cares? How many parents make no effort whatever to keep their adolescent sons and daughters at home! And meanwhile they are at questionable places, with questionable companions, and the movie houses and dance halls and automobiles and night life are ruining them, and they are going straight to the devil. Is it any wonder our hospitals and asylums and prisons are crowded? Is it any wonder our papers day after day reek with scandals? Is it any wonder broken-hearted fathers and mothers have no children to respect their gray hairs?

The world about you, my brethren, is filled with vice, and God will one day exact an awful account of you, if through any fault of yours the ideals and the traditions of the Christian home are allowed to die out. Do not blame the evil on the distressing social conditions under which we live, though God knows they are bad enough. Do not blame it on your poverty, for the happiness of the Catholic home

is not measured by the heaviness of the pocketbook, and we can recall many a good old Irish mother who toiled all day over a washtub to add a mite to her husband's slender wages, and still realized amid her poverty the ideal of the Christian home. But there was no vanity in dress then, or rather no half-dressed daughters running unchaperoned about the streets. There were no luxurious amusements, no pagan vices, no selfishness. These are the things that are ruining even Catholic homes today.

To protect ourselves against them, to keep alive the traditions of the Christian home, we must go back to Christ. He alone is the solution of all difficulties. And where do you find Christ? Only in the Catholic Church. Catholicism alone proclaims what marriage and the family should be. She alone safeguards the rallying point against the enemies that threaten it. She alone gives men the means to realize the ideal.

Human nature is weak and the practice of the domestic virtues hard, and the struggle against temptation is part of every married person's career. But the Catholic knows that victory is always possible with the grace of God. He knows that, as long as he remains in the friendship of God, the sacramental grace that was guaranteed him on the day of his wedding is ever flowing into his life. He knows that in confession and especially in Communion he has wonderful additional helps to keep faithful to the duties of his state, for no man or woman ever frequented the sacraments and suffered domestic ship-

wreck. The world outside does not understand. The world says men and women cannot be faithful to their marriage vows. But Catholics all know different. Is not the thought grand and glorious and stimulating!

Thanks be to God that we have the Catholic Faith which teaches us the way to virtue and helps us on the journey. By presenting the great spectacle of a mighty group of happy families faithful to God's laws, let us show this hesitating, distracted world which writes chastity on its statute-books and yet abandons itself unrestrainedly to the mastery of its passions, what sanctity and grandeur Catholicism lends the domestic fireside, and what strength and authority it gives domestic morality, guarding securely, as no other power on earth can, the great rallying point of Church and State.

## IV

### THE PRIEST AND THE RELIGIOUS

NO nation will ever prosper or expand or grow mighty unless the hearts of all the citizens are aflame with a spirit of loyalty and aglow with the sacred fire of patriotism. Yet, the stability of civil government does not precisely depend upon the commonfolk. The pillars upon which it rests are rather the comparatively small group of those who out of greater devotedness to their country give of their time, their energy, and their talents for its development and defense. They are the people's heroes.

Now, when one passes to the great commonwealth of the Catholic Church, it ought to be a source of intense gratification to every one of her two hundred and seventy millions of members that she too can point with pride to a great army of heroes and heroines who have generously and unselfishly dedicated themselves to the common cause, whose loyalty to Christ could never be satisfied with mere membership in His kingdom, but who, longing to signalize themselves in His service, have become the leaders of the people, their guides, protectors and benefactors.

One of the sublime glories of the Catholic Church

all through the centuries has been that splendid body of men and women who by their undaunted sacrifices have kept ablaze the torch of Faith, and handed it down more brilliant by the luster their virtues have shed around it, and who still live and labor in your midst to preserve and defend it. I mean your Catholic priests and Sisters and Brothers. It is of these I would speak today. The subject is a thrilling one that should be full of inspiration for all the laity. Unfortunately, many of our Catholic people are utterly unfamiliar with it, and many more unappreciative of its profound significance.

Priests and Religious, both men and women, stand for a specific ideal in the Church, and, just as the Christian family gets from the supernaturalizing influence of Catholicism an excellency and grandeur all its own, so priestly and religious vocations borrow their beauty and their splendor from the same Divine source.

The priesthood Christ Himself immediately established when He chose His Apostles, entrusted to them the completion and propagation of His Divine mission, and gave them the privilege of celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments. He laid the foundation of religious life when He said to the young man who aspired to something higher than the mere observance of the commandments: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and come and follow Me." From Christ's day to our own the Catholic priesthood has flourished to perpetuate His sacerdotal work, and men and women

have been striving for the higher perfection of which He spoke.

Of the intrinsic excellence of both these callings much might be said. Even in the Old Law the priesthood enjoyed distinctive prerogatives. But, when by Christ's Divine touch it attained a sacramental dignity, how much more glorious it became! In the New Testament the priest is a continuation—if the expression be permitted—of the very personality of Christ, another Christ. He acts with Christ and for Christ. He is Christ's ambassador. To His Apostles and their successors Our Divine Lord said: "You are the salt of the earth," for, as salt preserves meat from corruption, so is the priest placed among the Faithful to preserve them from moral taint and defilement. Again He said: "You are the light of the world," for the priest is set in the firmament of Christ's Church to shine during the dark night of this life and illumine for the people the road to God. The priest too is the friend to whom the Master manifests the mysteries of His kingdom, and to whom He confides the treasures of His Church. He is the father of God's people, the physician of their souls, the minister reconciling them with heaven. Above all, as St. Paul says, he is "taken from among men and ordained for the things that appertain to God that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sin." This is his chief excellence, that in the name of mankind he pays to the Creator the supreme homage of the human race, each day offering up the Lamb of God to cleanse the sins of the people.

As for religious men and women, though their dignity is far inferior to that which the priest enjoys (unless one of them unites the priestly and religious vocation), still, because they make the acquisition of perfection their profession, their state of life is usually said to be more excellent.

All Christians are called to holiness of life. "This is the will of God," the Apostle tells his early converts, "your sanctification." He is but repeating the Saviour's injunction: "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Now, this perfection consists in union with God through love. Not to aim at it, is to jeopardize one's salvation. Not to attain it, is to lose one's soul. There are only saints in heaven.

But, though all men are called to self-sanctification, the fundamental notion of religious life is that Religious make perfection explicitly their business, just as one makes law or engineering or medicine his life-work. Hence it is that religious men and women give up not only what is sinful—every Christian must do that; but to conform more closely to the ideals which Christ counselled, to remove the chief obstacles to virtue—"the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life"—by voluntary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they cut off all danger to their souls from the pursuit of riches, the love of honor, or the allurements of pleasure. Thus, they make a full renunciation of all that they have to God. They consecrate to Him the inherent right which everyone has to accumulate or at least freely to dispose of his wealth. They forego

for His sake even the legitimate pleasures of family life. They surrender to Him in the person of a Superior their liberty of action. These are the greatest sacrifices one can make to God, but the Religious has Our Lord's infallible word that his or her generosity in following the Master's footsteps will not go unrewarded. Indeed, He promises them a hundred-fold in this life and everlasting happiness in the next.

The priesthood was instituted primarily for the good of the people, the religious state for the good of its members. The priest's first duty is to his flock; that of the Religious to his own soul. But, as genuine love of God and one's neighbor go hand in hand, the priest must also be intent on his own sanctification, and the Religious must be zealous for the welfare of others.

How far their callings raise both priests and Religious above the commonfolk, you yourselves know. Even Catholics despite their faith marvel that young men and women can give up the world and assume the responsibilities of such vocations, and, in proportion to the admiration they feel for the sublimity and magnanimity of their sacrifices, is the scandal they and outsiders take when, as sometimes happens, they find one of them like another Judas, disloyal to his calling.

There never was a great work yet that did not demand pain and tears and heartaches, and, as in the Christian economy there is nothing nobler than the priesthood and religious life, so nowhere do you

find a call for greater heroism. Priests and Religious are God's own heroes and heroines, living witnesses to an unbelieving and sinful world that holiness and virtue still flourish among men. If nobility of character is measured by sacrifice, then nature's noble men and women are surely your priests and Sisters and Brothers. During the war we gave to our gallant soldiers and sailors who faced danger and death on land and sea and in the air a well-merited tribute of praise. But physical bravery is easy, compared with moral courage. Many a gallant lad who did not quail before the enemy's fire, lacked the strength of soul that self-conquest or the struggle after moral virtue requires.

Our Catholic priests and Religious stand for the highest ideals, so high in fact that they are ridiculed by a proud world unable to grasp the folly of the cross, and slandered and distrusted by a sinful world that, knowing nothing of purity and chastity and living only to glut its animal passions, is unable to understand how they can be faithful to their sublime obligations. The world forgets that the life they lead is not through their own strength, but by the power of God.

The world explains vocation to the priesthood and religious life in all sorts of foolish ways, but always our Catholic boys and girls who throw in their lot with Christ have only one motive-force influencing their lives. They believe, they hope, they love. They believe in God, in heaven, in the value of the human soul. They hope that, despite the weakness of human

nature, the grace of God will not be wanting to help them realize their ambitions. And they love intensely God and their fellow-men.

When the young novice closes the convent gate behind her, or the young seminarian takes the leap that places between him and the world an unfathomable gulf, it is only the spirit of faith, hope and love that sustains and invigorates them both to follow in the footsteps of the Master. The young girl bidding farewell to home and dear ones does it with a breaking heart. The young man, throwing aside the power to rise and acquire position in the world, finds the step hard. The aspiring levite knows—yea, knows well—the awful responsibility he is assuming, but he is strong with the strength of the Holy Ghost, and he goes forward unhesitatingly on ordination morning to hear the words and receive the sacrament that will make him a priest for ever and the slave of the people.

The secret of their sacrifice is love, for, if the life of the boy and girl who dedicate themselves to God means anything, it means love. Not the love merely of a fond parent and devoted brothers and sisters, for they have gone out of their father's home that their love might be broader than this: not of a wife or husband or children, for they have renounced all hope of them to make themselves more Christlike. Their love embraces every living thing that has an immortal soul.

The priest loves the little infant brought to him for baptism, and keeps it in his thoughts and prayers,

and rejoices in its growth and prosperity. He loves the innocent child and the growing adolescent bursting into manhood or womanhood with all its dangers and its trials. He loves the weary mother and the heavy-laden father, the poor and the sick and the aged. And, above all, he loves the sinner. Oh, he hates sin, for it is hideous, awful, murderous; it crucified his God. But the sinner—ah, he has a special predilection for sinners. The Magdalens and Augustines—how he looks for them, goes in search of them, welcomes them, helps them, prays for them! His love extends even beyond the tomb to the souls in Purgatory. They are his dead. How many of them he has laid away in the grave, and every day he pleads for them in Mass! Yes, only love built upon faith and hope explains vocations to the sanctuary and the cloister.

But, if the lives and characters of your Catholic priests and Religious are glorious and redound to the fair name of the religion you profess, what shall we say of their work for the spread of God's kingdom, the uplift of humanity, and the prosperity of the nation?

A young girl in the flower of maidenhood, refined, attractive, the joy of her home, one day announces that she is off to the convent. And what does it all mean? It means that, like a Catherine, a Theresa, a Margaret Mary, she has heard and heeded the Master's loving invitation to devote her life to His cause. Smiling through her tears, she departs. And to what? Perhaps to the Carmelites or the Poor

Clares to expiate in her innocent flesh by a life of penance the crimes of a wicked world and to pray for the conversion of sinners. Perhaps, as a Sister of Charity or a Helper of the Holy Souls, she is off to a life of toil for the poor and the indigent. Perhaps, as a Good Shepherd nun, she will aid in the reform of fallen women and the less fortunate members of her sex. One goes to instruct the little ones in one of our ten thousand parochial schools, another to cool the fevered brow and smooth the pillow of the dying in one of our thousand hospitals. Brought up it may be in luxury and ease, with every attention lavished upon her, she will spend herself mothering the orphan, nursing the sick, befriending the destitute, gathering together and sheltering the aged poor. At all events, where she is most needed, there will you ever find her. There will be no pain, no suffering, no bereavement, no misery that she will not sacrifice herself unsparingly to alleviate.

And all this she will do in a career sanctified by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The riches of the world she does not want. Her treasure is in heaven. She is satisfied with little. Her personal needs are few: no finery, no vanity in her dress, no jewels save her beads, her crucifix and the little silver band about her finger that reminds her that she has plighted her troth in eternal espousals to Christ. To Him she consecrates her virginity and, though in response to duty seeking out her poor or her sick or her wayward she may walk through haunts reeking with vice, God has given His angels

charge over her, and she will remain a lily among thorns, living a prayerful, laborious, edifying life and counting as the reward of her vocation the right to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth in the life beyond the grave and to sing the canticle which the Scripture declares only the virgin may sing.

But for our Catholic sisterhoods what would the Church do? Without them the great charity she metes out to the poor and the sick and the suffering would be an impossibility. Witness the hospitals and asylums and orphanages dotting the land where these generous women are spending their lives for God. Witness the vast system of our Catholic schools that means so much, not only for the Faith, but also for civilization. Even non-Catholics admire the idealism they stand for, else how explain why so many send their children to our Catholic nuns to be trained, or why when sick they go to our Catholic hospitals, or why many of them contribute so munificently to the upkeep of our institutions?

And what our girls are doing, their equally heroic brothers are doing in holy rivalry. You will find our religious brotherhoods in schools and colleges and hospitals and asylums and orphanages wherever you go.

And what they are accomplishing today, they have been accomplishing for centuries, and it might truly be said that the moral and material progress of humanity has been proportionate to their influence.

With the priest's work in the parishes you are more familiar. It is a matter of your life-long ob-

servation. His mission is to teach men the law of truth and duty and by the force of example to show them how to make truth and duty the abiding principles of their lives, and by counsel and exhortation to fortify them against despondency at the weakness of their nature. His work is to oppose the vices and evils that tend to undermine and destroy society, darkness in the intellect, sluggishness in the will and rebellion in the heart.

Take the priest from your lives and how much happiness and holiness would go with him! You know what he meant to you when as a helpless babe he cleansed your soul from original sin, clothed it with the white garment of God's grace, and made you a child of God and heir of heaven. You know what he meant to you when for the first time he placed upon your innocent lips the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to equip you for the battle of life. You know what he meant to you time and again when he heard the trembling confession of your childish faults and the promise of your repentance, and you know how much more he means now, when, weighed down with grosser and graver failings, like a repentant prodigal you seek his forgiveness in the holy tribunal of Penance. You know all that his sacred character stands for, and how he shares the burden of your daily joys and sorrows. And you know what you are expecting him to mean to you when death is near and the time comes amid the tears and prayers of your loved ones to say a last farewell to this world. Only in his sacerdotal help

will you rest your hope and consolation in that trying hour.

And how much of heroism and sacrifice his life stands for! How closely he follows in the footsteps of the Master! There are medals and decorations for distinguished service for our soldiers and sailors and national heroes, but everyone takes the priest's heroism as a matter of course. How often a sick-call brings him near to death, and yet neither smallpox nor leprosy, tropical fevers nor diphtheria, nor any other disease will halt the Catholic pastor on his mission of mercy! During the influenza epidemic a few years ago there was scarcely a diocese that did not have its priestly roll of honor. How many a priest has died a martyr of charity, and how many another has fallen at the post of duty!

Even under the most favorable circumstances heroism is the daily portion of the Catholic priest. But what if, though talented and gifted with qualities that might have made him great in the world, he spends his life amid hardship and poverty in some little out-of-the-way place, deprived even of the company of his fellow-priests, to bring comfort and consolation and the Faith to souls? What when he answers the call of the idolatrous nations of the East? As in the days when Ireland called to Patrick, Germany to Boniface, and America to the priests of Europe to leave home and country and come and break to aliens the bread of life, so the poor savage still appears to Christ's priests and, like the apostles of old, they take up the missionary staff and carry

to the heathen the strengthening and civilizing teachings of the Gospel.

I wonder how many of our American Catholics realize that scarcely a month passes but some of their priests set out to work amid the ice-floes of Alaska or amid the torrid heats of India or in pagan China or Japan, to spend their lives toiling unknown and unappreciated like the great St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of the Indies, or the zealous Father Damien, who ministered so faithfully to the unfortunate lepers of Molakai!

Surely, my brethren, you have reason to be proud of your priests and Brothers and Sisters whose lives are so Christlike and who follow so closely in His footsteps. I have insisted on their life and character and work at this time because our fundamental Lenten resolution was with God's help to make better Catholics of ourselves during this season of grace, and few things should be more inspiring than the realization that your Church, Christ's Church, has within it a vitalizing force that daily turns out men and women of such heroic mould.

Truly, this is one of the great glories of the Catholic commonwealth. In vain will you seek it elsewhere. Only among us is the priesthood found in its fullness. Priesthood necessarily implies sacrifice, and sacrifice connotes an altar and victim. Yet, strange to say, apart from Catholicism where will you find sacrifice or altar or victim, and where will you find the priest? The Jews have their rabbi, which means teacher, master, but nothing more.

The Protestant denominations have ministers, preachers, evangelists, anything and everything but a priest—another proof, if proof were needed, that their brand of Christianity cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ.

And, as the priesthood is a distinctive glory of the Catholic Church, so too is religious life. Protestantism has tried to engraft it on to the diseased branch its founders lopped off from the great tree of Christ's true Church, but there was no sap there, no life, and the effort has become a failure. Outside the Catholic Church religious life has never flourished. In vain will Protestantism attempt to reproduce it, because it is a supernatural state for which grace is needed, and only Christ's religion has the means of grace.

Our Catholic people have good reason, then, for self-congratulation and gratitude to God for the religious and priestly vocations in the Church. But this privilege also carries with it obligations. Of these they are not unaware, and, thanks be to God, rarely are they backward in their duties. They respect and esteem their priests and nuns and Brothers, and pray for them. They are prompt to defend their fair name against the foul and slanderous attacks of their enemies. They willingly lend them their encouragement and coöperation in what they undertake. As necessity requires and their means permit—nay, often at the cost of much personal privation—they share with them whatever good things God has blessed them with.

But I am afraid there is one obligation that many of them do not often enough reflect upon. I mean that it devolves upon them to recruit their continually thinning ranks. It depends upon our Catholic mothers and fathers, upon our Catholic young men and women. It belongs mostly to parents to plant in the hearts of their little ones the seed of this noble form of life, and to our young people to nourish and foster that good seed and bring it to maturity.

Time was when every Catholic family longed and prayed and toiled to dedicate at least one of its children to God's service. Is the Faith dying among us? Is the love of God dying? Is appreciation for the higher things of life dying? Has the irreligious atmosphere in which we live obscured our supernatural vision? Worldly advantages, greed for wealth, lust for ease and pleasure, these seem too often the only ideals in which Catholic parents today rear their children, and self-interest is hampering God's glory and the spread of His kingdom. Else how explain that, when our boys and girls face the problem of a career, they lack the courage and generosity to take the step, though God meant His priesthood to be propagated through them and religious life to thrive?

Too often, alas, parents measure the usefulness of their children by their money value to them and their earning capacity. Too often, alas, our young people measure success in life by the pleasure they get out of it. Parents forget, and their children are ignorant, that the noblest form of life is the life of service for

others. Our Catholic boys and girls are taught little of sacrifice, and the foundation on which the priestly and religious life rests is self-denial. They grow up full of selfishness, and nothing closes the gates of the sanctuary against them more surely. Saddest of all, when the question of their future confronts them, even though the beauty of ministering in God's house makes its appeal, many of them tremble to open the door and enter, because they know that, if His service means anything, it means chastity, and already perhaps their young hearts have been tainted by sin, already perhaps they have sacrificed the purity of their bodies on the altar of lust and become the slaves of base passions. What they might with holy pride have consecrated to God, they shame now to offer Him; though, for their consolation, be it said that even of an Augustine God's grace made a holy and useful Bishop in His Church, and He chooses men not precisely for what they are, but rather for what He can make of them.

Each year countless boys and girls leave our schools to begin life, and why is it that God and His service are so often not given so much as a passing thought, though professional, business and commercial careers receive due prominence and consideration?

This is a serious matter, my brethren, for those who have Christ's interests at heart. To speak only of the priesthood, in this country today to minister to nearly eighteen millions of Catholics there are only 24,000 priests, one priest for every 750 souls.

And with more what wonders might not be accomplished! Truly, the field is ripe for the harvest, but the harvesters are few.

Catholic parents, the greatest honor that God can bestow on you is to invite your children to His service. Just think what it means to a Catholic mother to see her boy at the altar a priest, to receive Holy Communion from his anointed hands, to have the comfort of his priestly ministrations on her deathbed, to know that, when God calls her to Himself, her boy will be devoted to things that are really worth while in life, bringing peace and joy and consolation to souls, and helping them to an eternity of happiness. It may have cost her a pang to part with him. It may have cost many a sacrifice to fit him for the work. But, oh, the ultimate happiness of it all!

During the War every parish had its service flag, and honored was the family that might hang out the star to tell the passer-by that patriotism flourished in its home. Our American fathers and mothers were proud as they sent their sons away, for, though they made the sacrifice with bleeding hearts, they were buoyed up by their faith in the cause and their love of country. Why should not every parish have its service flag of the young men and women consecrated to battle under Christ's standard? Why should not every Catholic home aspire to the star that would tell the world that the genuine love of God and fellow-men flourished there?

To the young people of my congregation—yea, to

all by whom the choice of a state of life must yet be made—let me say just one word. If Christ stands at the door of your hearts and knocks, if God gives you even an incipient desire to consecrate your lives to His service, to aspire after something that will make you truly useful and bring you peace and quiet and holiness in this life and the assurance of an eternal reward—treasure that inspiration and foster it. It is a precious grace not to be wasted. You may feel yourself unworthy of it and you are, for what man was ever worthy to stand at the altar and handle the Eucharistic Bread? But God chooses the weak ones of this world to confound the strong, and the foolish ones of the world to confound the wise. He regards not our sinfulness or our littleness. Goodwill is all He asks, and then by His grace, though pleasure allure and the world attract and the devil rage and the flesh lust against the spirit, you too can accomplish what others have done; you too can have the courage so many others like you have had to lead noble, generous, unselfish, priestly and religious lives, and make yourselves the real heroes and heroines of the Christian commonwealth, following in the footsteps of the Master.

## V

### HOW TO PROFIT BY SUFFERING

FROM the beginning the world has been struggling with knotty problems. Ever since the serpent asked Eve why she might not eat the forbidden fruit, the history of the human race has been one series of interrogations. The human mind that was made to know is continually asking "why." Why this? Why that? And, like bored schoolboys, one generation after another sets to solve the problems, and the span of life from the cradle to the grave is, for many a man, nothing but an attempt to explain its manifold riddles. Like little children amusing themselves over conundrums, some guess wrong, some give up. One old philosopher, every time he thought of life, laughed; another, every time he thought of it, wept.

The refrain of a familiar song says: "Life is a funny proposition after all." Although no right thinker may subscribe to the proposition, for anything that may end in an eternity of misery is tremendously serious, still the world, unless looked at with the eyes of faith, is at best a sorry spectacle. At every turn we witness its limitations and imper-

fections and disorders. At every step man meets obstacles to the attainment of that happiness for which reason and Revelation bear witness that he has been made. Whence come these shadows in the valley of life? Who strewed these evils in the way, and why? Can man rise superior to them, and how?

Materialists, atheists and sensualists explain the origin of the world's evils after their own fashion. In the Christian concept of life they come from God, though not all in the same way. Moral evil—and sin is the only moral evil—He merely permits. It has its source in a perverse will with whose liberty the Creator will not interfere. But physical evils, sickness, sorrow, pain, want and the like, as they are not bad in themselves, He can and does will for His own wise purposes. In the providence of God they are in the world to stay, and even religion cannot remove them. However, it is part of the glorious heritage of Christ's Church that, along with the other treasures that make up her precious dowry, her Divine Founder has bequeathed to her a practical solution for the daily ills of life. Both Christ and His Spouse the Church teach men, exiles in this vale of tears, how to see blessings in the evils about them, how to put the most peace and contentment into life, and how to get the best out of its discomforts.

Tonight, my brethren, I am going to offer you a few thoughts on this matter. It is another grand phase of the glorious life of our Holy Mother the Church which we have been contemplating, and

should fill you with honest pride. Besides, the subject ought to be most instructive and consoling, since it touches your individual lives in a very real way. You are mostly toilers, men and women who must either go from home to sweat and weary and spend yourselves in the factories and shops and offices of the city, or amid many privations must bear the burden of your daily housework. Objectively, your days have more clouds than sunshine, for, though every life has its share of joys and sorrows, somehow crosses seem to predominate in the lives of our Christian workers in an altogether disproportionate ratio.

Concretely, the things that men consider the great evils in life are poverty, suffering and toil. What then does the Church tell us about them? Briefly, when she cannot remove them, she mitigates them by her marvelous charity, and shows us their advantages, teaching us to supernaturalize them and helping us to face them bravely and profitably.

Poverty may be defined as the absence of material goods—if not of what is actually necessary, certainly of the comforts of life. Inborn in man is the longing for happiness, and, as material possessions apparently offer a means of satisfying this longing, quite logically the desire for them is a fundamental human tendency. By the perversity of fallen nature, this desire has been abused from the inception of time. Captivated by the pleasing illusion that money and the things it stands for could completely satiate the human heart, man early changed the Divine

evaluation of them until to live for wealth became the goal of life.

With rare exceptions, both among Jews and pagans the lust for wealth became paramount. Man made a little god of gold, and at the shrine of Mammon fell down and adored and made a sacrifice of all that he had. No means were neglected to satisfy his greed; usury, extortion, injustice, anything and everything was sanctioned if only it produced wealth.

Wealth brought the good things of life, and this appealed to man's sensible nature. Wealth brought position, fame and ease. Wealth brought adulation, comfort, friends. Wealth brought power. Blindness and corruption of heart followed and made might right, and wealth became the great dividing line among men. The rich held down the poor. The poor became slaves. Was it any wonder that, seeing his neighbor lolling in luxury, the heart of the poor man rebelled? Was it any wonder that life became a struggle for the rich man to hold and increase what he possessed, and for the poor man to acquire what he did not have? His poverty made him the under-dog; his poverty spelled misery, misfortune and wretchedness. He was unhappy. His name was a byword, and nobody cared for him.

Nobody cared for him? Yes, my brethren, Somebody did care for him. The infinitely great God in heaven, who knew the true worth of the things of time, compassionated him, and, if He would not entirely remove his miseries (since this might not be good for his soul), He would at least ennoble his lot

and teach him that poverty after all was not a disgrace, a crime, or a curse. He would teach him to put a right value on the things of earth, to restrain cupidity and avarice, to be content with little if honest effort be not crowned with more, and, contemning the vanities of the perishable world, to aspire for the joys of the celestial Jerusalem. And so God's prophets foretold as one of the distinguishing signs of the coming Messias that He should be the friend of the poor, that the poor should have the gospel preached to them.

And, when Our Divine Lord did come and the Jews questioned His mission, it was to this very fact He appealed. When John the Baptist preaching on the banks of the Jordan sent two of his disciples to inquire of Christ whether He was the long-expected deliverer of Israel, Jesus told the messengers to go back to John and tell him what they witnessed. And what was it? That, fulfilling the words of Isaias, He showed Himself the friend of the poor—that the poor had the gospel preached to them.

In the Christian philosophy of life poverty is a blessing, not a curse, and Jesus by His words and example would correct men's erring notions about it. The very first recorded utterance of Christ's teaching was: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Up to that time the merit of poverty was unknown. The world shrank from it in horror. Here was a new order of things. Time and again Our Saviour returned to the subject. On one occasion He said: "Woe to you

rich, for you have your consolation." And on another occasion He told the people that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. "It is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel," He said, "to pass through the eye of a needle."

Notice, however, that Our Blessed Lord does not say "Blessed are the poor" indiscriminately; for poverty may often be sinful, as, for example, when it is the result of extravagance or sloth, or when a man, though poor, still has his heart set on wealth and is ready even by questionable methods to grow rich. It is the poor *in spirit* that are blessed, that is, either rich people who are not inordinately attached to their wealth, who have gotten it lawfully, who possess it usefully, and who will give it up resignedly when God wishes; or poor people who actually lack the comforts and conveniences of life, and still do not envy or wrong those who are richer than they, but who, while trying industriously and justly to improve their condition, are contented with the state in which Divine Providence places them. These are they to whom Our Lord promises the kingdom of heaven.

Notice, again, that just as Christ did not say that poverty of itself was blessed, but only when sanctified by the spirit of detachment, so too He did not say absolutely that the rich will not be saved. Only that it is hard for them. The reason is because, as daily experience clearly demonstrates, wealth usually begets pride, selfishness, luxury, hardheartedness to-

wards the poor, and all those other vices that shut heaven against souls.

But Jesus Christ was not content with preaching. It is all very well for a man to talk when he has all he wants or needs himself, and doubtless in His day, as in our own, many a sleek Pharisee was preaching a doctrine of peace and contentment to the poor about him. That is not the sort of a teacher Our Lord was. He was convinced that poverty was a blessed thing. He advocated it, and He practised what He taught. "Being rich," says St. Paul, "He became poor for our sakes."

Recall His life, my brethren. Born in most abject poverty in Bethlehem, He lived the life of a poor man at Nazareth. "I am poor and in labors from My youth," He might proclaim. During His public ministry, He was actually indebted to strangers for hospitality. Of Himself at this time He says: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay His head." His clothing was cheap. His food was plain. And, as He lived, so He died, for the grave in which His Body was buried was bestowed on Him by the hand of charity. And why? To bring the world the remedy of which it stood in need. Had He been content to teach by word only, the lesson would never have come home to us that true and ultimate happiness is not to be found in temporal possessions.

After all, does wealth bring joy and peace and genuine pleasure? I dare say there is immensely more solid happiness in your hearts tonight than

among all our Wall Street barons and the great society folk that register from Fifth Avenue. Riches are beset with thorns. The passion for gold has never brought satisfaction to one single soul. Someone has compared riches to sea water: the more one drinks of it, the greater the thirst. And then again, what danger they incur! Once the desire for wealth is gratified, man is placed in a position to satisfy almost every other passion with greater facility, and each added temporal enjoyment implies an added risk of succumbing to temptation and falling into self-indulgence, sin and hell. And, finally, all too soon and unlooked-for the hour must come when the rich man sees himself with empty hands. How often the Gospel parable is repeated, and, just when a man after wearing himself out in laying aside a store of the good things of life says to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest," the angel of death says: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee."

This is Christ's solution of the great poverty problem. To all His followers He teaches poverty—to some indeed actual and absolute poverty, as we saw in our consideration on religious life, for of Religious He requires a total renunciation of their possessions. But to all He says: "Keep your hearts free from undue attachment to this world's goods; appraise things at their real value; be content with what you can acquire honestly, and lay up treasures, not on earth where the moth and the rust consume and the thief enters in and robs, but in heaven where no

moth or rust consumes and no thief enters in to rob."

By the disposition of Providence, my brethren, you are compelled to make use of material things within certain limits, and even to labor to increase them. But the Catholic program must be to acquire what one owns honestly, to use it sinlessly, and to be ready when God wills to leave it resignedly. If some of you enjoy many of the comforts of life, be not miserly or stingy or ungenerous to the less fortunate, for remember your wealth is only a trust. It is not to be squandered in rioting and luxury, but to be spent in true Christian charity. And, if the injustice of men or other unfortunate circumstances defeat your legitimate efforts to better your station, do not grow dissatisfied with God's providence. You can be happy without riches. You can save your souls without them. Far better poverty with a good conscience than all the millions of the Rockefeller Foundation. Finally, your poverty, hard and trying though it be, if accepted resignedly, will make you like to Christ, which is the surest sign of salvation for according to St. Paul: "Whom He foreknew He predestinated to be like to His Son."

The Christian philosophy of suffering is not unlike its philosophy of poverty. As human nature does not like poverty, does not want it, does not choose it, so it abhors and shrinks from suffering. Whether it come in the form of physical pain or mental anguish, certainly it has no natural attractions. And yet in one way or another it is interwoven into every life.

The gift of untroubled happiness has never yet been accorded anyone. If with the all-seeing God we might take in at a glance all that men are suffering at this moment, what a terrible panorama it would be? Why, if we could only grasp the pain of body that will be undergone tonight in a single hospital in one of our large cities, how appalling it would be! But add to the sufferings and the weariness and the loneliness of the sick all the broken hearts that are pining away in grief and desolation, all the worry and anxiety that men are bearing—ah, it is a crushing burden! And it has been going on from the beginning. And, my brethren, it is in our own lives. Many a smiling face conceals a breaking heart, and, if men's unrevealed sorrows were written on their foreheads, how often we should have to weep over the lot of some we now envy!

And the world that knows not God only offers remedies that aggravate matters. It tells its poor votaries to drown their troubles in carousing and dissipation, to seek to forget them in pleasure and merrymaking, to end them in a degrading act of despair, blind to the life beyond the grave. But religion, Christ's religion, has another solution for the difficulty. In the light of the Gospel, suffering is charged with peculiar significance.

Catholicism teaches us that pain was not in God's plan for man, but that it is part of the penalty consequent on the disobedience of our first parents. Divine Love in its gracious condescension had destined the human race to an existence free from

all sorrow. But now man must suffer to atone for sin. Catholicism reminds us that suffering can be made a stepping-stone to God. By life's transitory troubles God fits us for an eternal heritage of joy, for, to quote the Apostle, "that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us above measure and exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Finally, suffering sanctifies the Christian, for under the burden of trials one learns his littleness and nothingness in God's sight and grows humble, and, when the heart is bowed down in grief, the thought of God becomes filled with profound consolation. Many a soul has recourse to prayer in sorrow that would never have turned to it otherwise.

But Christianity is not content with telling man of the advantages of suffering any more than it was content with pointing out the glory of poverty. It does more. Catholicism sets before us a Man of Sorrows and a Mother of Sorrows whose heroic fortitude amid every form of suffering is an encouragement and a stimulus to our poor weak nature. In physical pain the Church bids us to study our crucifix, to study the all-holy, the all-good God Himself scourged and crowned and thirsting, and through our tears to look heavenward and say with Him: "Thy holy will be done." And, when calumny and slander and meanness—aye, and treachery—come into our lives, she tells us to recall how that same innocent Christ was betrayed by one of His disciples, denied by another, and abandoned by the rest. And, when our hearts are sick and weary and oppressed, she tells

us that Jesus Christ is in the tabernacle repeating His loving invitation as of old: "Come to Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you." And we go, and oh, how much gloom is dispelled in the light of that flickering sanctuary lamp! And when the greatest of all trials comes into life, and a broken-hearted mother stands by the newly made grave of an idolized child, the Church tells her to look up at the Mother of Sorrows as her heart is breaking on the heights of Calvary, and, though the pain be poignant, quiet and peace and strength come into her soul.

This is the Catholic Church's solution for the world-problem of suffering; she supernaturalizes it, so that we shall find consolation, not in sin and revelry and despair and an unholy death, but in quiet patience. Christian patience, that is the key. Not the so-called patience that shrinks from difficulty or discontentedly drags a load behind it day after day, but patience that takes up the burden that God imposes, lifts it shoulder high, and carries it courageously—patience that never wearies, never murmurs, patience that is strong, sober, steeled to endure, patience that abides steadfast in faith when all else gives way, and that some day in the life to come will find rest and the fruition of all its hopes. It is the patience of holy Job, who, out on the dunghill sick and diseased and mocked, still said sincerely: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." This must be the Christian's attitude towards suffering.

Like suffering, toil, the third great shadow in the valley of life, is also natural to man. It is indispensable alike to the welfare of human society and the individual, and without it nothing would be achieved. Even in Paradise man was to work, though work there was to be free from attendant hardships. Sin left man face to face with his own innate weakness. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt earn thy bread," was part of the primeval curse, and work that was to have been a delight and a pleasure, has been turned to a penalty and a torture.

For all that, it remains a prime duty of mankind, and as such is to be held in honor. And here is just where man makes his mistake about work. It is the old mistake of paganism, which had drifted away from the true idea. In its eyes, manual labor and hard toil seemed to involve a degradation, and the free man was ashamed to work. Slaves worked for him. Then Christ appeared on earth, and, as His doctrine and example revolutionized the current notions about poverty and suffering, so He sanctified work by the predilection He showed for the ranks of the toilers, and He elevated it by His own example.

He took as His Mother one whom tradition tells us was a weaver, and for His foster-father a common village carpenter. And at St. Joseph's same humble trade He labored up to His thirtieth year. Stand in spirit at the door of the workshop of Nazareth for a little while, and what do you be-

hold? Days filled with commonplace and toilsome drudgery, such as falls to the lot of the majority of men. Then recall that He who planes and saws and joins is the very God of heaven, all-wise, all-powerful, who conceived and executed the universe with all its glory and splendor, and that He stoops to this work for our instruction and encouragement.

Even when He began His apostolic ministry, exhausting labor was His daily program. When He preached, His audiences for the most part were laboring people. If the wealthier classes came, they were usually the curious, carping scribes and Pharisees. His Apostles were chosen from among the ranks of the toilers, being almost all of them fishermen; and they were summoned to a life of toil.

Yes, my brethren, Christ restored to work that dignity which essentially appertains to it, and the gospel of Catholicism through all the ages has been the gospel of the nobility of labor. Time and again, this has been cast at the Church as a taunt, but it has ever been her glory that she treads close in the footsteps of the Master, that she honors honest toil and honest toilers. For the Catholic Christian, work involves no degradation, however lowly it may be. Of the hardships it brings with it, the Christian makes a ladder to mount to heaven. Work for him is a means to render service to God. However commonplace his work may be, his religion teaches him to consecrate it to God.

Never, my brethren, was Christ's teaching more needed than in our own days. The oppression of

labor by capital on the one hand, and on the other the tactics of so many unprincipled men among the workers themselves, have wrought in society a condition so deplorable that only God knows where it will end. What makes things worse is, that often those to whom it belongs to rectify the evils evade their obligations or fail to recognize them with the result that the labor problem is as far from settlement today as it was a decade ago.

The question is a tremendous one, and all sorts of remedies have been proposed. But there is only one permanent solution. All others are makeshifts. The axe must be laid to the root of the trouble, which is moral. It cannot be dealt with merely as a political, economic or social problem. Justice and charity must be brought back to earth, and the individual conscience must recognize that the rights and obligations of life are mutual. If employers have rights, they also have obligations; and, if employes have obligations, they also have rights.

Every question has two sides, and so too has the social question. There is the capitalist side, and there is the labor side. The capitalist sometimes imagines that it is only a labor question, and the laboring man sometimes imagines that it is all a capitalist question. "Thou shalt not steal," cries one. "Thou shalt not covet," retorts the other. And, as usual, both sides are right, and both are wrong. Virtue always holds a middle course.

The capitalist's fault is to attach too much importance to wealth. The root cause of all the evils

of the world is Mammon-worship, and Mammon-worship is fearfully prevalent. Sometimes it is known by other names. Commercialism and industrialism are at first sight innocent enough, but, if commercial and industrial progress is sought for its own sake, and made an end instead of a means, it becomes Mammonism; and Mammonism leads to the violation of rights, to the neglect of justice, to international war and internecine strife. Those who love the hard cold metal—and this is the fault of capital—become like unto it hard and cold, hard towards their fellow-men and cold towards God. They imagine that this life is “the” life, and that they can eat, drink and be merry and plunder and graft and oppress without any thought of others or of their duties towards their God.

But the evil is not all onesided. The Gospel says: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” Unfortunately, the modern toiler is not without his faults. Though no one denies that the lot of the worker is hard, that he is often deprived of a living wage, that unless he asserts himself through organization he will become a mere slave to the wheel of labor, still he must not forget that the violation of God’s law to ameliorate his condition is never justifiable. The Catholic worker must be on his guard against the evil influence of demagogues and radicals and unscrupulous leaders, who promise to change this earth into a paradise, if only he throws in his lot with them.

More than a quarter of a century ago the great

Pontiff Leo XIII offered the world the only solution for the labor problem. But greedy, selfish men in both camps refused to heed his counsel. Meanwhile, till that happy day when an adjustment of all difficulties is had and equity and love find a place in the lives of worldlings, each one of you must solve the problem for himself. And how? Only, as Catholics, by taking your toil and its suffering and its hardship in the spirit of Christ and directing it to God, resigning your causes to Him. The sins of men that bring about your sufferings His Divine providence permits for reasons beyond our puny intellects to grasp—possibly for your trial and sanctification, to wean your hearts from earth and turn them heavenward. To Him you must look for consolation and strength. Unhappy, indeed, will be your fate if you do not. If you do, your daily labor will be so much coin with which you purchase for yourselves surcease from work and the riches and happiness of heaven which no man can take from you.

Again then, my brethren, thank God that you have a religion that has a message for the poor and the sufferer and the toiler, a message of light and truth and consolation, that tells them that God is watching the battle they so manfully wage, that He will not allow them to be tried above their strength, and that, if only they have recourse to Him with a clean heart and in humble prayer, their hopes will never be disappointed.

Look for Christ, ye poor! Look to Mary, ye suf-

ferers! Look to Joseph, ye toilers! In Jesus, Mary and Joseph will all the world find Divine light to dispel the shadows in the valley of life. From them they will learn contentment in poverty, patience in suffering, and amid the round of their laborious work a spirit of justice and charity towards all.

3/7/42

## VI

### THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

**I**T is a strange fact but nevertheless true that the same object may make quite a different appeal to different individuals. The gold that a Francis of Assisi so contemptuously spurns, fascinates the miserly Shylock. The knowledge for which the ambitious student will slave and burn the midnight oil, has no charms for the lustful, profligate libertine.

In any study of the glories of Christ's Church the attitude of mind of the inquirer will affect the selection of his topics. To the Jew the cross of Christ was a stumbling block and to the Gentiles folly, but to St. Paul and the early Christians it bespoke the power of God and the wisdom of God. In general, the very things that the Church most prides herself on, are most maligned and detested by her adversaries.

No Catholic institution is more frequently or more virulently attacked than the tribunal of Penance. Her enemies would paint it as a diabolical conception. To us of the Faith, it is one of her brightest ornaments. In the Catholic commonwealth it has a place not unlike that enjoyed in our American commonwealth by the Supreme Court, which un-

doubtedly is, after our Constitution, our best national asset, standing as it does for the highest principles of natural equity and serving as a check upon any attempted usurpation of power by the other departments of the Government. The confessional is our great tribunal of justice, and beside it the dignity, the grandeur, the glory even of the noblest of our civil tribunals fades into insignificance. For this tribunal is Divine in its origin, unique in its organization, and marvelous in its effects.

Penance is a sacrament in which the priest in Christ's name and by His authority, through a judicial absolution, forgives sins committed after Baptism. The power to remit sin is a stupendous one, and whoever possesses it has great reason for humility. Fundamentally, it belongs only to God, for sin is a transgression against His Sovereign Majesty. Only He personally or some delegate or agent acting in His name may condone it, may authoritatively declare that it has been satisfied for, that its guilt no longer exists. Now the Catholic Church maintains that by the great charter given her by Jesus Christ she is His representative and minister in this matter. Through the ages by incontrovertible proofs she has justified that teaching.

Christ's religion, my brethren, if it was effectually to save sinners, necessarily had to contain some means whereby man would know assuredly that his sins committed after Baptism were forgiven. Notwithstanding all that God does for the soul in Baptism—the graces with which He adorns it and the

helps He gives it to safeguard it against the attacks of evil—there comes a time in most lives, an unguarded moment, when the arch-enemy of human nature succeeds in robbing the soul of its innocence. Without some such institution as the Sacrament of Penance, there would be at that moment black despair, for though sinners may seem contented and even reckless of the evil within them, there are usually moments when conscience speaks and shows even the most hardened the wide chasm fixed between them and happiness, between them and God—a chasm that, if eternity comes and finds them in this state, shall never be bridged over. Christ's religion had to have hope even for such as these, and that too no matter how often they had fallen. Thank God, it has! Christ Himself has established a definite ordinance, an outward sign to which He has attached the grace of pardon, meeting thus that great need of the human heart to know that it is forgiven with a practical certainty that will drive out fear.

Open Holy Writ at the twentieth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and what do you read? The Evangelist is occupied with recounting the marvels of the first Eastertide. He has just narrated the appearance of the risen Saviour to Mary Magdalen, and then he continues: "Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: 'Peace be to you.' And when He

had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: 'Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.' When He had said this, He breathed on them: and He said to them: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' "

Here you have in unmistakable language the Divine commission by which the pastors of Christ's Church, as successors of the Apostles, absolve repenting sinners. Could anything be more clear? Could an unbiased, an unprejudiced inquirer reading the text for the first time, without departing from the natural and obvious use of language, find any other interpretation for it?

"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." If one actually wanted to grant another the power to remit sins, could he possibly find words to make his intention plainer? Jesus Christ is speaking, Jesus Christ the God-Man, who on another occasion not only says that all power is given Him in heaven and on earth but declares specifically that He can forgive sins—who, to justify an actual use of that power when the hostile Pharisees accused Him of blasphemy in professing to absolve the sins of the palsied man, answered: "That you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say to you: 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk.' " Now that same Jesus Christ speaking to

His Apostles shares with them that Divine power. "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. The Father sent Me to be the Saviour of men; He sent Me to reconcile them to Him; He sent Me, the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world. As the Father hath sent Me, so I send you. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

But someone will say that, while this text shows that the power of forgiving sins is in Christ's Church, it does not prove that confession is the process whereby this power is to be exercised; that that phase at least of the Sacrament of Penance does not seem to be Christ's ordination. Might one not merely recount his sins to God in secret prayer, then kneel before the priest, and have him pronounce that they were forgiven?

In the first place, confession is a sort of natural need of man. There is nothing so disquieting as a troubled mind. When man feels most miserable, there is an instinctive yearning for someone in whom to confide. Who does not know the glad relief of unburdening to a friend a heavy-laden heart? Yet, there are times when one cannot go to friends, crises where God alone can comfort and strengthen, and when even in our dealings with Him the secrecy of private prayer will not satisfy. We want something more sensible, something more tangible. We must talk and be talked to. It is this that some of our Protestant brethren and even Jewish Rabbis have been waking up to recently; and while of course they

would not dream of fostering what they consider the superstitious practices of Catholicism, still the papers tell us that some of them are advocating the practice of confession, if not to obtain forgiveness of sin, at least for its psychological effects. Accordingly, even without Scripture we might expect that Christ who knew the human heart so well would have made some provision for this need.

As a matter of fact, when He said to His Apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained,"—or again on another occasion: "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven"—His words essentially indicated that He was instituting a rite that was to be judicial in form, that the sinner who wished his chains loosed and his sins forgiven had to manifest his transgressions to the Apostles.

Note that He leaves to the discretion of His ministers whether the sins shall be forgiven or retained, whether the penitent shall be loosed or remain bound. His Apostles are, therefore, to be judges. But how can they acquit or condemn, unless they have learned the charges and heard the evidence? How are they to determine in a given case whether they are to exercise one or other of the two distinctive powers He gives them—whether to forgive or retain, to loose or bind—unless they understand the dispositions of the penitent and know the quality, number and gravity of his offenses, whether

his contrition is proportionate to his guilt, and whether he is ready to make satisfaction both to God and to man? And how can they know all this—since sin is a matter of the will and the heart and the intention—unless the penitent lays bare his conscience? Christ's priests, too, are physicians, and how can they apply remedies to the diseases of the soul if they are ignorant of the symptoms?

Unquestionably, the same text that empowers the Apostles to forgive sins, necessarily connotes an obligation on the part of the sinner to manifest his transgressions. In other words, Our Saviour's words do actually prove, not only that the power to forgive sin is in the Catholic Church, but that auricular confession is the process by which it is to be exercised.

Just here is another glorious feature of the supreme court of the Catholic Church. Not only is it Divine in its origin, but it is unique in its organization. The judge is a man, and yet he performs an essentially Divine act. The judge is a man, and yet he adjudicates the claims of God against the sinner and of the sinner against God. God Himself is one of the parties to the cause. As the priest binds the sinner, so also he binds God. The penitent has offended God mortally. God has a right to send him to hell eternally. God's priest, learning from the sinner that he is repentant, says to him: "By the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ of which I have the disposal, I remit your sins. You shall not go to hell." And, wonder of wonders,

God Himself is irretrievably bound! Could we conceive an institution so incomparably sublime! God has made the priest His judge; He must accept his decision. God does not say: "Whose sins I forgive or retain, you can declare forgiven or retained; what I loose or bind in heaven, you can declare loosed or bound on earth." But just the reverse; "What you forgive, I forgive: no more, no less." The priest forgives, retains, looses or binds, and God ratifies and seconds his act.

What makes the sacrament more unique still, is that, because he is a man and a sinner, every judge in turn becomes a penitent. If others must confess to him, he must confess to his fellow-priests. Like the youngest Catholic child, the Pope himself must submit his sins to the power of the keys if he wishes forgiveness.

Another remarkable feature about the organization of this Divine tribunal is that in confession the penitent is at once accuser and accused and witness. In the processes of our criminal courts men do not swear themselves to the scaffold or the electric chair. The State is always their accuser. The majority of them even will not plead guilty. Relatively few testify against themselves, and no judge is ever told by a culprit all the malice of his heart. Rarely too is a sentence accepted, I will not say thankfully, but even resignedly.

But in the confessional the sinner of his own accord comes forward and bears witness against himself. Humbly, sincerely, candidly, he reveals to

Christ's minister the inmost secrets of his soul—his most hidden thoughts and desires. Only in the Catholic Church have you a tribunal that infallibly gets at a man's conscience, that does not deal in circumstantial evidence, that puts a penalty on the culprit that he will not only accept, but accept gratefully and graciously. Only in the Catholic Church have you a tribunal that can bind a man without aid of sheriff or constable spontaneously to restore the goods or good name of another whom he may have injured, and penalize himself for his wrongdoing. Only in the Catholic Church do you know that the satisfaction the penitent makes will efficaciously improve him, for the punishment inflicted by our State tribunals, though meant to correct delinquents, more usually (especially in the case of young offenders) hardens them and makes them worse.

Moreover, as the State deals with criminals, they are tried and condemned in public. The whole world knows the charge and their guilt and punishment and, the more sensational the crime, the greater the publicity, with crowds of newspaper reporters and photographers dogging the culprit's footsteps. Here—and this is a sweet compensation of Our Blessed Saviour for the humiliation of confession—here everything is secret. The Catholic confessional is public in our churches where everybody may see it. But the confession itself is always private. The trial is in secret; there are no records; and never was an earthly secret so sacred.

Under certain circumstances a doctor or a lawyer

may disclose a professional confidence. But the law of silence imposed upon the Catholic confessor is not one of human origin and admits no exception. The confessor's tongue is tied forever. Neither the welfare of innocent persons, nor the welfare of the Church, nor the welfare of the State, nor the welfare of the penitent, nor the welfare of the confessor himself, can ever justify the breaking of the confessional seal.

Thanks be to God, my brethren, never was secret so well kept. When the Catholic man and woman enter the confessional box, they know that what goes on in there is between themselves and the priest and God. They know the priest will not violate their confidence. They know that, though there have been Judases in the priesthood, the providence of God has watched sedulously over this sacrament. They know that, though for nineteen hundred years confessions have been heard in every land under the blue canopy of heaven, the worst enemies of the Church have never established an authenticated case of any one of them being revealed. They know, too, instances and these not infrequent of confessors who were victims of this seal, and who sacrificed honor, reputation, and life itself to guard it.

Is it not for this that St. John Nepomucene is now in the catalogue of the saints? You know his story, and how the infamous Bohemian king, Wenceslaus, because he could not wring from the holy Bishop by flattery or threat or torture the confession of his wife of whom he was insanely jealous, ordered him

thrown headlong over the rocks of a deep precipice. The story of the Kohlman case is public history in New York—how in the early nineteenth century the Jesuit priest was ready to go to jail and was actually imprisoned rather than reveal a confessional confidence. And, scarcely fifty years ago, did not a dastardly murderer in Russia confess his crime to the parish priest to silence his lips, and then weave a net of circumstantial evidence about him so that he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Siberia? There for twenty years, from 1860 to 1880, that heroic confessor labored hard in the dark and dismal coal mines, and only after his death did the sacrilegious wretch on his own death-bed avow his diabolical crime. Yes, my brethren, the secret of the confessional is God's secret. The priest takes it with him to his grave.

How proud we ought to feel of the Catholic penitential system, of its Divine origin and its unique organization, and of the tremendous good it has wrought and even yet effects, on people and nations in general, as well as in the souls of individual penitents!

(M) In criminal cases a jury may declare a man innocent or guilty, and the judge may ratify the verdict, but neither judge nor jury can change the actual status of the criminal. If he has done wrong, at large or in the penitentiary his guilt remains: he is always a murderer, a thief, an adulterer. But in the tribunal of Penance Christ's minister says: "I declare you no longer guilty of this, that or the other

sin, I forgive that sin," and its guilt is actually wiped out. The words of priestly absolution are not a religious fiction, merely implying that God will no longer impute sin to the sinner, as some Protestants say. The words of the priest really effect what they signify.

Who shall describe the change that then takes place in the soul? You remember the Gospel stories of the wonderful miracles wrought by Our Divine Saviour in the physical order when He raised Lazarus and the daughter of Jairus to life after death. Mortal sin is the death of the soul. Grace is its life. By the absolution of the priest grace is infused into the soul of the sinner, and once more he lives and breathes the supernatural life, the only life that counts. A moment before he was God's enemy; now he is His friend. A moment before he stood poor and naked and in shame in His presence; now he is clothed in the robes of purity and holiness. A moment before his soul was the abode of demons; now it is the very temple of the Holy Ghost. A moment before hell was his portion; now he is a child of God and heir of heaven. Just grasp the idea, my brethren, that when you go to confession something actually takes place in your souls—a real transfiguration. Then in very truth will you appreciate the beauty and grandeur and glory of the Sacrament of Penance.

Almost universally, in Protestant theology God never forgives sins. He cannot forgive sin. Once we have fallen, it is impossible to remove the guilt.

The stain can never be washed out. It is true that God treats us *as if* we were not sinners, but all the time He knows better. He sees that our souls are actually covered with the foul leprosy of our crimes. How cold a doctrine! How disheartening! How blasphemous to the omnipotence and infinite goodness of the great God! How alien is such a doctrine to the spirit and the truth of Christ's infallible word: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained"!

What peace of heart accompanies the remission of guilt obtained in the Catholic confessional! Experience teaches how disquieting is the worm of conscience reproaching one with impiety, injustice, impurity or some other vice. How often the remorseful soul wishes it had not done the deed! Priestly absolution cannot undo the fatal act, but it can and does assure us that, malicious and despicable and foul as it was, God has pardoned it. He no longer holds it against us. Its guilt has been removed, and its awful penalty has been commuted.

Besides being a source of actual remission of sin, and consequently of interior peace and tranquillity, is not the Catholic confessional an efficacious help to holiness? You and I know that it is not merely the prayers that we say in common in our churches or the sermons preached here that make our Catholic people virtuous but especially the light and grace and strength that they get in that little box over there.

It is the practice of confession that enables our

boys and girls growing up and exposed to danger and temptation, to become pure and honest and God-fearing. Catholic parents—even those who are lax in their own religious practices—know that they need have little worry for their sons and daughters so long as they frequent the confessional.

As for married people, this sacrament gives the married man the surest pledge of the loyalty of his wife, and to the married woman it guarantees the fidelity of her husband, when each knows the other has frequent recourse to it, for they understand that disloyalty and infidelity to their marriage vows are incompatible with habitual worthy confession.

Go from pole to pole or follow the sun's light as it sweeps about the earth, and wherever you find Catholic men and women regularly making good confessions, there you will find Catholic people honest, upright, industrious, charitable, good citizens and good subjects.

Of course, no one maintains that going to confession absolutely secures our people against all future relapses. The weakness of human nature is too well known. Still, any Catholic will bear witness that, if he slips back into old vices after confession, it is not because of it but in spite of it, and that without the sacramental grace falls would be worse and more frequent. True, one confession has made saints, but ordinarily the process of Christian perfection is a slow and tedious one. We must not then be discouraged with our repeated falls despite the use we make of holy Penance, or let the devil

induce us to remain from confession because we observe no marked improvement in our lives. The aid the doctor gives a man in the winter, and the cure of his cold which he effects, is no guarantee that the patient will not get a cold again next winter. But it is a present advantage that no one but a fool would discard and neglect.

Sometimes people remain away from the Sacrament of Penance because they say: "What's the use? I've been to confession so often, and I'm no better. The strength of passion, my bad habits, or the circumstances of life in which I am thrown, assure me that I am going to sin again." My brethren, this is a subtle yet most ridiculous temptation. Just as logically ought you to refrain from dinner today because you will be hungry tomorrow, or from sleep tonight because you will be tired again tomorrow night. Why not make some allowance for God's grace and God's help? Trusting to yourself, you certainly will fall again. But, if a Magdalen and an Augustine and so many other holy penitents could by Christ's grace make saints of themselves, may you not hope eventually to rise above mortal sin?

If it be true that we cannot even gauge our personal improvement after confession, far less should we indulge any rash judgments of others whom we see relapsing into their old vices notwithstanding their frequentation of the sacraments. God alone knows how strong their temptations are. He alone knows how many other temptations they generously resist. He knows, too, just how shamefully perhaps

we would act did not His loving providence remove from us the occasions He allows them to fall into. It is not the Catholic who goes to confession and slips again under stress of temptation that deserves censure, but the so-called Catholic who shuns the tribunal of Penance altogether just so that he will not have to make an earnest effort to rise from the mire of sin in which he wallows. To sin is human. To confess one's sin humbly and sincerely is manly. Not to want to rise from it is diabolical.

Confession, then, is a guarantee of virtuous living and a help to it. That little box over there is one of the great glories of the Catholic Church. Without it, where would we go when the guilt of sin weighs heavily upon us? When we come to die, and like an awful nightmare the panorama of a life spent far from God looms up before us, and His judgments and the roaring flames of hell face us, what hope would remain for us without it?

To know the full extent of the effects the Catholic confessional produces, ask your convert friends what light and guidance and relief their souls found in the holy sacrament, which was denied them before they entered the Church if their sect rejected Penance. Ask some of our business men and public corporation officials, who will witness that time and again the holy tribunal of Penance has been the means of restitution to them of large sums of money of which they had been defrauded. Ask even non-Catholic doctors and nurses what a difference they find between the sick who have the consolation of

confession and those who are denied it or refuse it. They know for a fact that much physical ill is directly due to moral ill, and that, if they cure the latter, nature itself will take care of the former.

Thanks be to God, then, that we have in the Catholic Church, Christ's true Church, the Sacrament of Penance to be our consolation and our comfort and strength when we have sinned. Let us glory in this supreme tribunal, this magnificent ornament of the Christian commonwealth which through the ages has sanctified and protected and encouraged so many millions of souls. Let us show our appreciation of it by frequent recourse to it. It is there for our sakes. That court is always in session, never adjourned. I have yet to see the Catholic who regretted going to confession. I have seen many who went reluctantly and timidly, but who came away ecstatically happy.

How often we hear the expression: "If I only had my life to live over again, how different I should be!" My brethren, at least in the moral order we may live our lives over again, for after every sincere confession we begin as it were a new accounting with God. All the old debts, heavy as they were, are wiped out. How comforting this is! We begin again to live after we have died. Let nothing, then, keep you away from the confessional, especially when conscience warns you that you have offended God seriously and are no longer His friends. The Council of Trent calls Penance the last plank of the shipwrecked soul. And it is.

Let not the devil dissuade you from its use by false shame or fear. The fear is groundless, for confession is preëminently the tribunal of mercy. As for the shame, better far a little confusion now than the awful shame of the unrepentent sinner on the last day.

Some stay away because they say their sins are too many, too grave, too vile. They do not know the infinite mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They forget that He said of Himself: "I will not the death of the sinner but rather that he be converted and live." And again that He came "not for the just but for sinners." The whole purpose of the Incarnation was to forgive man his sins, and surely, if one reflects on what that great mystery means, no sin will ever make him lose heart.

Others stay away because they have negligently let a long time, perhaps years and years, pass since their last confession. For the return of these stray sheep especially does Jesus yearn. Like the father of the prodigal, His Heart is breaking till they come home again to Him. He will not scold them; He will not upbraid them; He will not humiliate or punish them. He will be happy, intensely happy, and the angels of heaven will be glad because he that was lost is found, and he that was dead shall have come to life again.

As we near the end of the Holy Season  
 of Lent we should lessen our Lenten. We  
 follow the Cross Daily, exp. Lent, and Lent  
 to encourage us, the Lenten as He is  
 with us at all times - He joins us  
 the Son of N. L. - He is dying in the Tab-  
 THE EUCHARIST  
 to come & send comfort down - to receive  
 Him after in Holy (Holy Thursday)

WE know how important an evaluation man puts upon food for his physical well-being. Everyone realizes that a people cannot thrive unless their sustenance and nourishment are guaranteed. The opulence of a country is measured rather by its food resources than by its metals, its scenic beauties, its climatic conditions or other advantages. Nobody wants to live where he thinks enough food will not be supplied to keep body and soul together.

The spiritual life of the soul parallels the physical life of the body. Logically, then, one would expect that any religion worthy of the name would find some means to safeguard it. Strange to say, practically none of the Christian sects offer any adequate means either to effect or to sustain supernatural life.

In the system of Catholic theology these means are furnished by the sacraments. As by human generation man is begotten in the natural order, so a regeneration through the saving waters of baptism begets him to the supernatural life of grace; and, as the vitality of his body is abundantly nurtured, fostered, strengthened, defended and repaired by

means furnished him by nature, so in the spiritual order the sacrament whose special purpose is to nourish, foster, strengthen and defend the life of the soul and be its food is the Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist, my brethren, is in truth the greatest treasure of our holy religion. Here is her grandest mystery, a wonderful work surpassing all God's other works, a marvel so stupendous that only Supreme Wisdom could conceive it, only Supreme Power could accomplish it. Christ promised His Apostles that He would be with His Church all days even to the consummation of the world. Though He fulfills this pledge by remaining with her with His truth, His grace, His protection and assistance, His infinite love could not be contented with this. He must abide with men also in His own Divine Person. "My delight," He says, "is to be with the children of men."

In the Blessed Sacrament we reach all that is great and grand and glorious in Catholic doctrine and practice. Here we have our very God, personally and perpetually present. Here we have the climax of the glories of the Catholic religion. Its contemplation ought surely to stimulate enthusiasm for our Faith and an added sense of responsibility for its proper practice.

Under the appearances of bread and wine, the Eucharist contains the true Body and true Blood of Jesus Christ, with His Divinity and His Humanity. The glorified Christ, the whole Christ, the God-Man risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of

the Father, is in the Blessed Sacrament in a miraculous, incomprehensible manner, invisible but really present.

To bring this about you have a stupendous series of miracles: the laws of nature are suspended, changed, and overcome. The substance of bread and the substance of wine disappear, and are, as it were, replunged into nothingness, and still their sensible accidents—the figure, the form, the color, the taste—remain without the subjects to which they naturally adhere. A human body is there without dimension, weight or mass. It is multiplied indefinitely without losing its unity. Apparently inert, it palpitates with life and love. Though eaten, it is not consumed. The Word made flesh is wholly in each particle of each Host, and wholly too in every Host in every part of the world.

During His public career, Our Divine Lord clearly assured the Jews that He would give them His sacred Flesh to eat and His precious Blood to drink. In the sixth chapter of his Gospel, St. John records Christ's promise completely and unmistakably. It was the day following the multiplication of the few loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand hungry people in the desert. Once more the devoted crowd was gathered about Him, and, taking occasion from yesterday's events to raise their minds from the material food of the body to higher things, having prepared them as it were by that miracle for the strain He was going to put on their credulity, He said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me

not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endureth for life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever, and the Bread which I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews, thereupon, inquired among themselves: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat of the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you; he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him."

Many therefore of His disciples hearing it remarked: "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured, asked: "Doth this scandalize you? The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life." And after that many of them went back and walked no more with Him.

Without a juggling of language, could one take any other meaning out of this incident than what the Jews and the disciples took? They understood Jesus to refer, not to any figurative eating and drinking, but to a real actual eating and drinking of His Flesh and Blood. Note what they said: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" They accepted

His words in their obvious meaning, and, because they could not imagine how He might do what He said, many walked no more with Him. They never adverted, perhaps, to the equally startling fact that they had eaten the loaves the day before without understanding just how Jesus had multiplied them. Surely Our Blessed Lord, if He did not mean them to interpret His words just as they were uttered, both in justice and in charity should have corrected the false impression He gave. Yet He made no attempt to do so.

What Jesus at that time so solemnly promised, found its fulfillment at the Last Supper. Then "He took bread into His blessed hands, and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: 'Take ye and eat; this is My Body.' And then, taking the chalice, He likewise gave thanks and said: 'Drink ye all of this. This is the chalice of My Blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sin. Do this for a commemoration of Me.' "

In these historical facts, in the infallible promise of Christ and its glorious fulfillment, we have the basis for the worship you and I give the Blessed Sacrament. We admit the Eucharistic Presence, not because we understand it—we don't—but because we have indisputable evidence that Jesus Christ whom we know for other reasons to be the God-Man and who therefore can neither deceive nor be deceived, instituted the Holy Eucharist and bequeathed it to the Church which He founded.

If you ask how this is possible, I reply that Jesus Christ is God and God is almighty; nothing is impossible to Him. I reply that Jesus Christ is God and God is infinite truth, and He has said it. That is the motive of our faith. That is the basis of Catholic devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The Catholic does not understand the Real Presence; he believes it. But neither does he understand many of the marvels in the physical world round about, even the most commonplace things—the mystery of life, the mystery of death, the nature of eternity.

Faith implies assent to something on someone else's word. Without it the world could not get on. We continually believe things of which we have not first-hand knowledge. Most of us had to take the word of others a few years ago that a war was going on in Europe. All of us have to take the word of others about the most sacred relations of life. How do we know our own parents except by faith? And Catholic faith is merely assent to the truths of religion on the word of God. To accept Christ's word, and to submit our puny limited intellects to His teaching, is—far from being a degradation of our reason—sublimely noble. To refuse that submission, as people outside the Church do, because we cannot comprehend the mystery is the height of human pride. In reparation for all that pride, let us renew our belief in the Eucharistic Presence. Let us make an act of hearty adoration of Jesus Christ sacramentally present amongst us, joining our homage to that of His angels standing by; and, full

of admiration for the wisdom and goodness and power of the God-Man manifested in the institution of this holy sacrament, let us cry from the depths of our being: "O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament Divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine!"

But why is Christ in the Holy Eucharist? What does He do?

In the first place, as our great High-Priest, He offers Himself up uninterruptedly as a victim to His Eternal Father for the good of our souls in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. You know what the Mass is—the great unbloody Sacrifice of the New Law that renews Christ's bloody death on Calvary, the great act of worship in the Christian religion that alone offers the Sovereign Trinity adequate adoration and thanksgiving and atonement, and draws down upon this sinful earth as it revolves through space all the graces and blessings that the God-Man merited for humankind. It is the clean oblation foretold by the prophet Malachy nearly four hundred years before the birth of Christ, which was to be offered every place from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

You know, too, your solemn obligation to assist at Mass at stated times. Some, no doubt, have on occasions shirked this duty, or at least have often been late, and unnecessarily late, for the Holy Sacrifice. Let us check up our conduct and generously resolve to correct whatever may be amiss in this matter, and for the future let us never begrudge

Our Blessed Lord this little hour His service demands every week. One hour out of one hundred and sixty-eight! Fifty-eight hours a year at most out of nearly nine thousand! Surely, it is a small thing that He asks and the Church imposes. I pass over the many pretexts you may allege to justify your carelessness in this matter. Only let me remark that it is safe to say that no one who is habitually faithful to his Sunday Mass will ever be in serious danger of altogether losing his Faith.

And what about attendance at the Holy Sacrifice on occasions when it is not of obligation? If our Catholic men and women could only be persuaded to make a month's trial of attendance at week-day Mass, and experience for themselves the tremendous blessings that Our Divine Lord would pour into their daily life and work, they would never give up the practice they had begun. For some perhaps it is impossible; for many more it is not. Thanks be to God, however, there are many faithful souls—Catholic business and professional men, clerks, salesmen, laborers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers—who daily assist at Mass, often at great sacrifice. They would feel that somehow their day was bound to suffer, were they slothfully to omit the pious practice. For them the Mass is the great key that each morning opens God's treasure-house from which during the day they draw out spiritual and even material blessings in abundance.

But Mass, my brethren, is not the only time of Christ's activity in the Holy Eucharist. All day

long, all night long, He abides on our altars; and all day long, all night long, He is busy. Who can tell what goes on in the tabernacle through the long solitary nights? There Our Eucharistic God prays for you and for me, even as during His earthly sojourn He used of an evening to retire to the mountain top to intercede for us. In those nocturnal hours when every possible wickedness is rampant, when the world goes on dreaming its old dissolute dreams, then Christ's prayer goes up from ten thousand tabernacles to draw down graces for a sinful and ungrateful world.

68- And what does Our Saviour do in the Blessed Sacrament all day? Ah, we all know. Here He is to grant us a hearing. Here He is, the King of Heaven, keeping open house for any of His subjects who may wish to come to Him. Here He is, His sacred ear ever inclined for any petition that may be brought to Him. How quickly we reach His presence! We have only to cross the street and open the door of His palace ourselves. We enter without being announced, without even a permit, like little children running in and out of their father's home; and, when we speak to Him, we need not trouble about finding the correct word.

With the eye of the imagination scan the earth, and what a coming and going of men each day sees before the Blessed Sacrament! Surely, Christ is never long inactive on our altars. How much is there discussed before the tabernacle—there settled, purified, restored! What great resolutions

are made there! What sacred vows are registered! What heroic sacrifices are planned and undertaken! What streams of consolation and tenderness flow forth from the tabernacle upon the Faithful! What marvelous intercourse between Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and His children! In the course of centuries, what has He not seen from His tabernacle home!

In this one little spot, how much has He not witnessed! How quietly He has dwelt here for years, and yet what a power! How much suffering has there been brought to Him! How many troubles told! How many hearts that have long ago fallen to dust, once came here seeking peace and comfort! To how many bridal couples has He given His blessing! How often has He gone from here on an errand of mercy to the homes of the dying to be their Viaticum, their strength, for the last awful journey! Upon how many tear-stained caskets has His compassionate eye looked down, as some weary soul now lay in silent repose before His altar, joining His sympathy to a sorrowing mother or father or wife or husband or child, and consoling them with those assuring words: "Your dear dead only sleep. I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me shall not taste death forever." Oh how good is our Eucharistic God!

Really, one would think that, apart from offering Himself in Holy Mass and interceding for us and consoling and blessing us by His Eucharistic Presence, Christ could do no more. Yet the story

of the incomprehensible love of the Heart of God for man is but half told. Our Lord said to the Jews: "My Flesh is meat indeed for the life of the world," and He is in the Blessed Sacrament chiefly to be the food of our souls.

It must have been a beautiful spectacle to witness the children of Israel, walking forth each morning in the desert to gather the heavenly bread that had rained down at daybreak for their nourishment and support. Yet, something far more beautiful takes place each day in Catholic Christendom. With the dawn the manna of the New Testament, Jesus Christ the God-Man, under the lowly appearances of bread, descends mysteriously upon the altar at the softly spoken word of His priests, and good people may be observed all over the globe thronging to our churches to gather in this miraculous Food for their eternal life.

What a wonderful thing is the Blessed Sacrament, when we contemplate it as the food of our souls in this valley of tears! Holy Communion is, as we know, the receiving, really and truly, into our beings of the very Flesh and Blood of the Incarnate Son of God. Can we ever comprehend what that means? No, not even if we had the intellects of the highest angels. What a tremendous thought, that Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of our souls as He is, should feed us, His wayward sheep, with this heavenly, supernatural, Divine food!

Christ yearns to be received by us in Holy Communion and to be received often. Because of the

coldness of so many hearts, Holy Mother the Church imposes on us the grave obligation of approaching Holy Communion at least once a year. But Our Lord Himself is anxious to come into our hearts, not only at Easter, but as often as possible. Nothing would please Him more than if all the Faithful were to receive Him daily. "Give us this day our daily bread," He taught us to say. He does give it, but we refuse to eat it. Foolish creatures that we are, we know our souls are starving, and we feed them on nothing but the husks the world has to offer.

Christ has no need of us, but we need Him. This is why we should receive Him often in Holy Communion. We need the Holy Eucharist, because it preserves and increases in the soul sanctifying grace, which we know is the life of the soul. "As the living Father," Our Lord says, "hath sent Me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me." Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. When He comes into our souls sacramentally, that life is nourished and strengthened.

We need to receive Holy Communion frequently, because one of the chief fruits of the intimate union it establishes between us and Jesus Christ is that it weakens our evil inclinations, and gives us a greater relish for the practice of virtue and increased energy in the exercise of good works. Time and again we complain to ourselves that we want to be good and cannot. One of the principal reasons is that we rely

too much upon ourselves, and not enough upon the help of God. If we try to fight the battle of life alone, we are sure to fail. If Christ is with us in the warfare, we will infallibly crush our evil propensities.

The presence of our Lord in our hearts works a wonderful transformation, and makes us terrible even to the devils. It lessens concupiscence and our tendency to evil, and, not content with purifying our souls, its effects actually overflow into our bodies, so that the passions and especially sensuality cease to exert over those who frequently have the Eucharistic Christ as their guest the same influence that they exert over others. Hence it is that the Prophet foretold the Holy Eucharist as "the bread of the elect and the wine that maketh virgins."

Through Holy Communion Christ, in a certain sense, divinizes and changes our nature into His own, as leaven changes a quantity of flour. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him." There is this difference between the spiritual food we receive in Communion and the ordinary food of the body. The latter is less powerful than our nature, and so we assimilate it; the former is more powerful than our nature, and consequently converts that nature into its own. In very truth, our nature is ennobled by Communion, as a wild branch is improved by being grafted on a cultivated tree.

You remember how the blood of the lamb, sprinkled over the door-posts of the houses of the

Israelites, protected the inmates from death when God's destroying angel passed over Egypt and slew the first-born. How much more, then, should not the Blood of Christ ward off danger from our souls! You remember too how, when the wicked Nebuchodonosor cast the faithful Hebrew children into the fiery furnace because they would not sacrifice to idols, God's angel spread his wings about them, and they were untouched by the raging flames. How much more will not the presence of Christ Himself within us shield our souls from the fire of concupiscence!

Holy Communion gives men strength to endure trials and sufferings, and surely we all have plenty of them. It was the Blessed Sacrament that fortified the early Christians when they were so cruelly persecuted, and gave them courage even to encounter martyrdom. It will do the same for us, if only we wish it.

Receiving Communion often, facilitates the practice of virtue. When Christ is frequently in our souls, we spontaneously, little by little, become more like Him, and consequently more holy even as He is holy. Does not constant companionship with those we love tend to make us like them? And, the greater the love and the more continually we are in their company, the more like them we become. We adopt their way of walking and dressing and talking, and come to love what they love and dislike what they dislike. So it is with those who often receive Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. Insensibly they grow

more meek, more kind, more charitable, more humble, and surely the world would be a happier place if we all had more of these virtues.

We know from Scripture that, wherever Jesus went during His earthly career, the sick and the infirm and the blind and the palsied and the fever-stricken came to Him, and as many as came were healed. Now, all of us have our spiritual maladies—and how many they are, and how wretched the thought of them sometimes makes us feel! There is the faintheartedness that hinders and hampers us in aiming at the heroism of self-denial and self-sacrifice, without which there can be no genuine Catholicity. There is the depression and discouragement that is answerable for so many sins. There is the weakness of a fickle and wayward will, which betrays us into so many daily faults and makes us an easy prey to human respect, afraid to do what we know to be right for fear of the open ridicule or tacit disapproval of others.

And do not many among us suffer from even more dangerous maladies? Some perhaps merely limp along in the service of God, and seem to be affected with a sort of spiritual paralysis that renders them almost powerless to resist temptation, and all but incapable of seriously amending their lives. Some have allowed themselves to be so blinded by pride that faith has grown dim. Others the fever of passion has robbed of their strength, or the more deadly cancer of impurity is eating away their spiritual vitality. Assuredly, we all have need of a soul-

physician, and who better can heal our disorders than Jesus Christ?

Finally, the frequent reception of the Blessed Sacrament is a guarantee of our future beatitude. Surely, here is a point that each of us would like to feel secure about. At best, it is an uncertain matter, yet it is the most important thing in life. Indeed, our uncertainty about this future would be an ugly nightmare disturbing our every waking moment, were it not that we have Christ's infallible promise attaching the right and title to a glorious resurrection to the reception of His Sacred Body and Blood. He says: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day." How consoling! And, on the other hand, He makes that awful threat: "Except ye eat of the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." The choice is left to us. *resurrection*

My brethren, just as you believe in the fact of the Real Presence, I am sure you are also convinced of the need you have for Communion and the beneficial effects that accompany its reception. Yet, is it not odd that many of our Catholic people allow long intervals to elapse between Communions? Why? What is it that keeps them away from the altar rail? A want of faith? No. A want of love? Ah, no; they all love Our Lord dearly. What then? Only one thing: they allow themselves to be duped and deluded by specious objections against frequent Communion that arise in their minds. *of Heaven*

Some the thought of their utter unworthiness deters. Well, we all are unworthy. No mortal being, even the Blessed Mother of God herself, is worthy of Communion. God knows this, and yet He bids us receive Him. Indeed, the more imperfections we have, the greater our need of Communion. If our unworthiness is culpable, if it is the unworthiness of mortal sin, it takes only good will to remove it though the holy Sacrament of Penance. How do we expect to grow worthy? Is it by staying away? For how long? Will it be till we sin no more? Communion itself is the best means to diminish our unworthiness. Moreover, if this excuse were valid, we ought not to receive the Eucharist even at Easter time. Despite our unworthiness, let us not remain away. Rather let us humble ourselves and go lovingly to Our Lord with the sentiment of the centurion in our hearts: Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

A false fear of growing too familiar with Our Lord deters some from frequently receiving Him. It is true that familiarity is apt to breed contempt. But not when there is question of dealing with God. On the contrary, to know God well is to love Him more. What blasphemy it is to think that approaching God will make us wicked, or that absence from Him will advance us in holiness!

Some stay away from Holy Communion on the plea that they do not feel devotion when they receive often, and because they are so distracted that they find it hard to pray and prepare themselves

properly and devoutly. Here again is a delusion of Satan's, hindering the growth of grace in the soul. Sensible devotion is not necessary. To have devotion and to feel it, are not the same. The little child does not spend all day hugging its mother, and its love is none the less ardent while it is playing with its companions. We can love Christ without feeling that love. In aridity the best prayer we can make is to tell Our Lord regretfully we cannot pray as we would like, and beg Him to help us to grow in the spirit of prayer. After all, prayer is nothing but converse with God, and, if it comes to the worst, we can make the very things that distract us the subject of that conversation.

Have you ever sincerely thought what this world would be without the Blessed Sacrament? Take Jesus Christ from our temples, and they would be bleak, cold meeting-houses. Take the Eucharistic Presence from our tabernacles, and Catholicism could offer you only the cold ministrations of the Protestant sects. Take the Blessed Sacrament from our religion, and where would we get consolation in the crosses of life, and hope in the sins of life, and, when the shadows of the grave are gathering, what would supply for the holy Viaticum?

If you would learn what a difference the Blessed Sacrament makes, ask our gallant boys who returned from the trenches what It meant to them. Amid the horrors of war they found their greatest consolation in the little white Wafer that the chaplain elevated as he celebrated Mass in some pit in the bowels of the earth, and in the Sacred Host they so

eagerly received just before going over the top. And when many of them never came back, how often did it happen that the only comfort of a broken-hearted wife or mother was the sadly sweet recollection that, before their dear one went to meet his God in judgment, his lips had been purpled with Christ's precious Blood, and Christ's Sacred Heart had beat against his own!

Would you know what a difference the Blessed Sacrament makes in life? Ask the poor men who suffered in our camps a few winters ago from the "flu," far from home and friends. Jesus was their strength and their support, and, as they faced eternity, many a look of agony was softened into a smile of hope because Christ's minister had brought them their Saviour to prove that He loved them even to the end, and to assure them that, despite the faults and failings and sins of poor weak human nature, He was waiting on the shores of the great beyond to welcome them to their true home.

My brethren, let us show our appreciation of what Jesus has done for us and is doing for us. Let us resolve that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is going to have more place in our lives. Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist loves us. Let us love Him in return. "Behold the Heart that has loved you so much," He says. Let us say to Him: "O dear Jesus, I too love Thee; only feebly, it is true, but I wish to grow in Thy love. O Heart of Jesus burning with love for me, inflame my heart with love for Thee!"

## VIII

### THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

*(Good Friday)*

**T**ODAY the whole Christian world is in mourning. Among us Catholics especially, everything bespeaks sorrow and desolation and grief. Our churches are somber and bare; our altars are stripped of their ornaments; the sanctuary lamp is out; the tabernacle is empty. This morning no bell called the Faithful to prayer; no Mass was celebrated; no Communion distributed. The priests came to the altar in vestments of black; the usual glad peal of the organ was hushed, and not a single note of joy marked the solemn functions. For today Holy Mother the Church commemorates the death of Christ Jesus her Founder, of Christ Jesus the God-Man, who, infinitely innocent and holy, became the victim for the sins of the human race, and by His excruciating sufferings and most painful death upon the cross satisfied the offended justice of His Eternal Father.

We are met here this evening to live over again for a brief space the sad events of the Passion, and

to sympathize affectionately with our dying Saviour and learn the lessons of virtue that only His heroism and unselfishness can adequately teach.

In spirit, let us join the little party of which Christ is the center, which late Holy Thursday leaves the upper room in Jerusalem, where the festival of the Pasch has been traditionally inaugurated, where Jesus has washed the feet of His disciples to give them an example of humility, where He has celebrated the first Mass, instituted the Blessed Eucharist, ordained the first priests, and where finally He has uttered that beautiful discourse on charity and taken a fond farewell of His devoted Mother. The silent group winds down the moon-lit road, passes through the city gate, crosses the Brook of Cedron, and enters the Garden of Gethsemani on the sloping hillside opposite, and here the first harrowing scene in the great tragedy is enacted.

Leaving eight of the Apostles near the entrance and taking Peter and James and John somewhat further into the seclusion of the garden, Jesus bids them watch and pray, and then Himself retires a stone's throw beyond to engage in the same holy occupation—and to suffer.

The Gospel tells us that He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad, to be afraid and to fear. Oh, can it be true that Jesus Christ is actually afraid, that He whom the very elements obey is trembling with fear over there under the olive trees? Yes, it is true, for omnipotent God though He be, who poises the very heavens in His hands, He is also

Man like to us, and the anticipation of the night's coming outrages and of the morrow's bodily sufferings agitates Him even as impending evils worry and harass us.

In fancy He sees all that is to come. But O, my dear brethren, keen as is the vision of the torments ahead, of the black perfidy of Judas, of the cruel abandonment by the Apostles, of the apostasy of Peter and the ingratitude of the Jews, it is as nothing compared to that other vision His all-seeing mind conjures up—the vision of the sins of men for which all those sufferings must be undergone. That was the sight that made Him bite the very dust in a paroxysm of agony; that was the picture that took Him back three separate times to the sleeping disciples seeking comfort; that and that alone was the terrifying spectacle that overwhelmed His great soul with grief, that drove the color from His cheek, that forced the precious Blood from every pore of His tender Body, and wrenched that piercing cry from His agonizing lips: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death . . . Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.”

Yes, my brethren, Jesus Christ had come into this world only to satisfy for sin, and yet tonight the contemplation of its enormity and malice, the thought of the accumulated guilt of all ages and men and nations, the realization of the tremendous outrage it implies against the sovereign majesty of the Creator, is almost more than He can bear, and His sacred Humanity wavers and falters at the prospect

of the atonement ahead, until the prayer of His breaking, bleeding Sacred Heart brings an angel from heaven to strengthen Him for the task, and, fortified by that consoling visitation, He is able to say with the utmost heroism and fullest resignation: "Not My will, but Thine be done."

As our hearts go out in sympathy to our grief-stricken Saviour, and as we strike our breasts in sorrow for our sins that caused His suffering, let us also learn the lesson of prayer His agony in the garden is meant to teach the Christian soul. In the crosses and trials of life that come to us, let us not weaken and lose courage, but let us turn to God in humble, earnest supplication, for from our prayer we will get help to face bravely the battles of life, even as Jesus Christ rises strong and courageous, ready to meet the ruffian band that has come out with swords and clubs to apprehend Him.

The whole world knows the next detail of the sad story, how Judas Iscariot betrayed his Master with a deceitful kiss—Judas the Apostle that Jesus loved so tenderly, Judas for whom He had done so much. Judas whose feet He had washed and kissed that very night, and whose lips had been purpled with His precious Blood in the first sacrilegious Communion. Is it any wonder that the name of the ingrate Apostle has come down through the ages as the very incarnation of treachery and disloyalty? Is it any wonder that in a few hours, a prey to the blackest despair and deaf even to the pleadings of the friendly Heart that strove to show him mercy

and win his hardened soul to penitence, we shall see him a suicide dangling from a tree in the deep, dark valley of Hinnon? Judas, the victim of a greed for money! Judas, an eternal failure for thirty pieces of silver!

My brethren, as we look about the world this Good Friday, how many traitors to Christ we find! If we turn our thoughts upon ourselves, perhaps, which God forbid, our hearts will tell us that we too are Judases in sin or ready to sin because of a lust for money and the material things of this earth—ready at times for a few paltry dollars to cheat and to steal, to lie and to perjure ourselves, to injure our neighbor and run the risk of damning our souls for all eternity. How many a man or woman for a little filthy lucre will sell their virtue or their honor, heedless even as Judas was of Christ's repeated warnings: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

Amid insults and jeers Jesus is bound and led away, down the hill, across the valley, back through the city gate and up to the palace of the high-priest, while in fear and dismay His cowardly disciples all flee, forgetful that only shortly before they had sworn that they would not be scandalized in Him, and that they were ready to die with Him and for Him.

I need not go through the horrors of the hours that followed—the foul treatment of Jesus before Annas and Caiphas the high-priests, how He was brutally struck on the face and mocked and spit

upon, and how after a trial that was no trial, on the testimony of perjured witnesses and on the charge of blasphemy, He was declared worthy of death by the hypocritical Jewish council and remanded to the custody of the soldiers until morning, when the sentence could be formally approved and He could be delivered over to the Roman Governor who alone had power to decree capital punishment.

No need to recall the weary, suffering hours that Our Saviour spent that night in the soldiers' barracks, the object of their scorn and ignominy; how they blindfolded and buffeted Him, how they bent the knee in ridicule before Him, and how their ribald laughter, their taunts and imprecations, their oaths and lewd remarks, grated on His sacred ears. Suffice it to remember that those sufferings were the price that Christ paid to repair the sins that night after night men commit in their mad quest for unlawful pleasure, for the abominations and crimes, the debauchery and dissipation that God in His heaven must each night look down upon in every quarter of the globe. From His dungeon on Holy Thursday night Christ puts the question to each one of you: "Under cover of the night are you glorifying God or transgressing His Divine precepts?" Whatever, my brethren, may have been our recklessness in the past, at least in the future by our sanctification of the sacred hours of night, let us not add to the sufferings of Our Saviour.

Hardly is Good Friday morning come when the chief priests and scribes stand with Jesus before the

palace of the Roman Governor, eager to have their sentence ratified and executed. A brief examination of the prisoner assures Pilate of His innocence. "I find no cause in him," is his answer to the Jewish priests. But they are insistent: they will not brook a dismissal, and Pilate, to rid himself of his embarrassment, sends Jesus to Herod.

At the court of the Galilean the Jews meet with no better success. The voluptuous Herod can elicit nothing from the chaste Jesus, and, after making sport of Him before his court and clothing Him with the white robe of a fool, he sends Him back to Pontius Pilate. Once more the fickle Governor questions the God-Man, but the whole demeanor of Our Saviour and the straightforwardness of His answers are convincing arguments for His innocence, and once more the Roman Governor tells the people: "I find no cause in him." And yet, strange inconsistency for a judge, he adds: "I will chastise him, and let him go."

Common decency forces us to pass over in silence many shocking details of the cruel and bloody scourging to which our Divine Lord was now subjected. Fastened to a pillar, Jesus the all-pure stands exposed to the vulgar gaze of the rude and scoffing multitude, while big brawny Roman soldiers, more beasts than men, rain blow after blow upon His delicate Body. One band succeeds another at the pitiless work; knotted cords and leather thongs and spiked rods are all brought into play. With the first strokes the Sacred Flesh grows livid; each lash

cuts deeper and the Blood flows freely until at length in sheer disgust, sickened at the spectacle, one of the soldiers snaps the cord that binds Jesus to the pillar, and exhausted and suffering He falls wallowing in the pool of His own Blood. Brutally they throw His garments about Him, and, then with a refinement of cruelty almost unheard of, they plait a crown of thorns and place it on His sacred brow.

The saints tell us that the humiliations and sufferings that Jesus underwent when scourged and crowned in the courtyard of Pilate's palace, were the peculiar punishment that Divine Justice exacted of Him in satisfaction for the sins of the flesh of the human race, for all their lusts and immodesties and indecencies and lewdness. The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, consecrated to God in baptism, and by sins of luxury especially does he defile and pollute that temple.

Where then is the Catholic Christian that voluntarily fosters unchaste thoughts, that feeds his imagination on unholy images, that allows free scope to his senses, and indulges in sins of impurity? By every forbidden thought deliberately entertained, he presses the crown of thorns deeper into the throbbing temples of the Son of God, and by every illicit pleasure he gives his senses, by every act by which he pampers his body and gluts his passionate appetites or gratifies its lustful cravings, he adds another stroke to the cruel blows of Christ's barbarous executioners.

Even as Pilate was disappointed in the outcome

of the trial before Herod, so is he again disappointed in thinking that, having scourged Our Saviour, the Jews will be satisfied and let Him go. He now has recourse to a third expedient. On the solemn day of the Pasch the Governor was accustomed to release to the people any prisoner whom they chose. He then had a notorious malefactor awaiting death who was called Barabbas, and so he said to the crowd: "Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?"

Picture if you can, my brethren, the scene: the balcony of the Governor's house, the mob below, and Pilate with Barabbas on one side and the Man of Sorrows on the other. Oh, surely there can be only one answer to that question: "Which will you that I release to you?" And yet, strange ingratitude of men, the Evangelist tells us that the chief priests and the ancients persuaded the people that they should ask for Barabbas and make Jesus away.

"What then shall I do with Jesus that is called the Christ?" asked the Governor. And they cried out: "Away with Him; crucify Him!" And the Governor said to them: "Why, what evil hath He done?" But they cried out the more saying: "Let Him be crucified!" And Pilate, ignoble, base, shameful Pilate, seeing that he prevailed in nothing and fearing that he might incur Cæsar's anger in Rome, for the Jews as a last resort had charged that Jesus refused to pay tribute to Cæsar and perverted the nation—Pilate, taking water, washed his hands before the people and said: "I am innocent of the

blood of this just man, look you to it." And the whole people said: "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" Then Pilate released to them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus to be crucified.

"His blood be upon us and upon our children!" Oh, my brethren, the Blood of the Son of God has been upon them and upon their children. About forty years later their city was destroyed till not a stone was left upon a stone, and from that day to this the Jewish people have been wanderers upon the face of the earth, the brand of deicide stamped upon their brows.

"Give us Barabbas! Away with Jesus! Let him be crucified!" My brethren, as often as a temptation to mortal sin comes into our lives, the scene on the balcony of the Roman Governor's palace on the first Good Friday morning is repeated. Our conscience says to us each time: "Which will you, Barabbas or Christ? Which will you, the observance of God's law or your own gratification? Which will you, Sunday Mass and Friday abstinence, just and charitable dealings with your neighbors, purity in your private life, and sanctity in your marriage relations—or the indulgence of your passions?" And—oh, the humiliation of the admission—how often sin gets the better of the bargain, and our voices go to swell the blasphemous cries of the Jews: "Away with Him! Crucify Him! Give us Barabbas!"

The last chapter in the history of the Passion is briefly told. Laden with a heavy cross, Jesus sets out on the painful road to Calvary. Arrived at the

summit of the mountain, the cross is flung upon the ground, and Jesus is stretched upon His bed of death. The blows are struck which nail Him to the gibbet. The Blood gushes forth. The cross is dropped into the socket prepared for it. For three long hours He hangs there in agony, suspended between heaven and earth, a malefactor on either side of Him. Before and around Him, wherever His dying gaze lights, is the crowd of Jews—all Jerusalem—come to witness His shame, come to blaspheme and mock Him, come to gloat over their triumph and His disgrace! And these are the same people for whom He had worked miracles, to whom He had so often preached, and who only the Sunday before had welcomed Him enthusiastically into their city!

In sympathy and sorrow let us stand at the foot of the cross. Let us catch the last words of the expiring Christ. As in life so in death, forgetful of Himself, His first thoughts are for others. Listen to that prayer of supreme charity for His murderers: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"—to that generous response to the good thief's petition for mercy: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." Recall that thoughtful solicitude for His blessed Mother, whom He so lovingly commits to the care of St. John.

But what is that cry of desolation that pierces the blackness of the hillside: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And that other cry that follows close upon it, "I thirst"? They are the expres-

sion of the very depths of the mental anguish and the physical suffering of Our Saviour. But the thirst of His parched lips is as nothing to the thirst of His Sacred Heart for the souls He is dying to save. That thirst, my brethren, we can slake. And as we gaze at the crucifix this evening, and kiss reverently Christ's sacred wounds, those wounds our sins have made, let us offer Him the refreshment of a humble and contrite heart, a heart pledged to make our peace with Him in the holy tribunal of Penance for Easter, a heart vowed to greater efforts at loyal service in the future.

Jesus Christ is dead. And, as we look up at the cross, each one of us must say: "That murder is my act. I crowned that head. I wounded those hands. I drove those nails. I killed my God." And we must strike our breasts in shame and confusion and sorrow at the realization of the awfulness of our crime. Still, thanks be to God, each one of us can also say: "Though I crucified my Saviour, He died full of love for me, He died forgiving me, He died praying for me and winning graces for me, so that, scarlet though my sins may be and black though my past ingratitude may seem, I need not despair. I can look up through my fears and my tears, and still hope. I know that for the sake of the precious Blood of His Son God will forgive me my sins, no matter how foul they be. I know that He will strengthen me, no matter how deep-rooted my bad habits or vicious inclinations may be. And so I utter my prayer for mercy and pardon. And I look

up into Mary's loving eyes, that Mother of Sorrows whose heart I have broken today, and in them I read the answer to my prayer, a message of forgiveness and of hope. Confident in the mercy of Jesus and the intercession of Mary—the Man of Sorrows and the Mother of Sorrows—I feel strong to face the new life of Christian virtue to which I pledge myself, firmly hoping like the penitent thief that, when the day of my life is over, despite my sins and failings and negligences, I too shall be with Christ in paradise. O, sweet Jesus, be merciful to me a sinner!

## IX

### THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

(*Easter Sunday*)

MY dear brethren: Easter with its hallowed associations has come once more, and, as we re-read the simple yet sublime recital of the Evangelist recounting the resurrection of the God made Man, many and beautiful are the thoughts that surge in upon the mind. True, they are the old thoughts; still, as we dwell upon them at each recurrence of this glorious festival, they seem to take us by surprise, as if for the first time we were thinking on them. In spirit they carry us back to the first Easter morning, and, as we stand before the hallowed tomb, we see the great stone rolled back and the grave clothes lying about; we behold the angels clad in white robes guarding the empty sepulchre; we catch the echo of the exultant message they proclaim to the holy women who had come out from Jerusalem to anoint the dead Christ's body: "Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen. He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him"—and at the gladsome tidings our hearts are filled with holy joy.

In the cycle of festivals, my brethren, that mark

the Church Year, two especially stand out, Christmas and Easter. Though they have this in common that they are both days of intense joy, the thoughts that center around the little grotto outside the City of Bethlehem are far different from those that fill our minds this morning. Christmas is a festival of quiet peace. The angel sounds its keynote: "This day is born to you a Saviour." And our hearts are aglow like little children's that God has come to earth, and that a season of grace has begun for a world steeped in misery.

Still, when we analyze our sentiments at Christmas time, we must confess that our joy is somewhat selfish: we are happy chiefly for our own sakes; a Saviour is born for us. But for the Babe of Bethlehem shivering in His manger we can hardly be glad, for His midnight birth in poverty and want is but the first of a long series of sufferings that will extend over thirty-three years, and will be consummated only when on the cross He commends His spirit into the keeping of His heavenly Father. But today the jubilation that fills our hearts as we catch the new angelic message: "He is risen, He is not here," is wholly unselfish. We rejoice and are glad solely for Christ's sake. This is the day of His triumph. A few hours ago He hung dead and in shame upon the cross, His life apparently a failure. Today He turns that failure into triumph and rises in glory, a conqueror over the grave, thus assuring His followers that He was all that He professed Himself to be, and that He would do all that He had pledged

Himself to do. This is Christ's day of victory, and, because we love Him tenderly in return for the many great proofs of love He gave us, we are glad that He rises to glory, rises to die no more.

Easter, my brethren, is a day of victory—victory so complete it knows no equal in the annals of the world. It is a day of conquest—conquest so tremendous that no thought of ours can compass its inutterable grandeur.

Does not every human conquest make our hearts thrill? How often we have experienced the rapture of spirit that accompanies the thought of victory? How gladsome, for example, the welcome we gave our youthful conquerors who came back to us a decade ago from battles nobly fought and nobly won? The heart of the nation beat high with joy, and there was not a hamlet in the country that did not catch the spirit. Our cities were decorated; holidays were declared; flowers were spread in the path of their march; flags waved from every housetop, and the huzzas of a jubilant people and the music of a thousand bands were but weak expressions of the sentiments everyone felt as men looked upon the brave young heroes marching home with victory on their banners and unstained honor in their souls.

The human heart loves a conqueror, and yet the human heart is too often sadly and painfully disappointed in its heroes. All man's conquests are incomplete. Even when the boys came from abroad, some were not there. They were missing, because they lay asleep beneath a foreign soil, because they

mingled their blood with Alpine snows or poured it out on the fields of Flanders or of France.

And, even when human victories are complete, they do not last. Without referring to the danger of renewed conflict, there is the universally acknowledged fact that every human conqueror is in the end himself conquered. There is an enemy that knows no defeat. He may grant an armistice for a brief space, but sooner or later he will come back and come back to conquer. He has set up his kingdom in the vicinity of every town and village and of every city. Day by day, hour by hour, he leads his victims captive to the grave. Death, this awe-inspiring enemy, can boast of universal conquest.

There have been great warriors who laid low the nation's foe and the nation's rivals; great statesmen who thrilled the souls of men by their intellectual appeals; great scientists who conquered, as the expression goes, the very forces of nature. But where are these conquerors now? Every single one of them has been conquered by death. Look back through the arches of the years and what do you find? A long, long line of tombstones. Conquerors conquered is the epitomé of human greatness. "Here they lie," is the brief phrase that tells their present earthly history.

Surely, it would be a singular triumph and an unspeakably brilliant victory if someone were to conquer Death, this universal conqueror! Would not such a triumph rouse the soul to an ecstasy of joy that would ring to the very heavens!

Someone *has* conquered Death, and we celebrate that conquest today and honor the Conqueror. On Good Friday we saw Jesus Christ die in ignominy and agony on the cross. With hearts full of grief, we accompanied Mary and the little funeral procession when, down in the ravine on the far side of Golgotha, she laid Him away in His alien tomb. How strange it all was! He seemed to have had power over Death. He hurled the monster back at Naim, when He stopped the funeral procession and restored the young man to his widowed mother. Again at Bethany He beat back the universal conqueror when at the tomb of Lazarus He cried out: "Lazarus, come forth!" But now He Himself is dead—dead and buried down there in that ravine among the lilies.

He is dead? Oh, my brethren, approach that grave this morning. Do not shrink with that natural repugnance we feel towards entering the silent homes of the dead. My dear good friends, here you need have no fear. Christ's tomb this glorious morning is not like other tombs. It is empty. It has no such inscription as "Here he lies." It is guarded by angels, who tell the holy women: "Be not af-frighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen. He is not here." Such is His epitaph, like unto which no epitaph had ever yet been written: "He is risen. He is not here."

Behold the mighty Conqueror of Death as He stands in glory near His empty tomb, His face shin-

ing as the sun, His garments white as snow. Now you have a Conqueror that has not been conquered. Now you have a conquest that is complete and lasting, for Christ rises to die no more. He shall not taste death again forever. O Death, where is thy victory? O Death, where is thy sting?

The message of Easter Sunday is then, my brethren, a message of victory, of conquest, of triumph. Verily, "this is the day the Lord hath made," and, as the Church sings, "let us be glad and rejoice in it." In truth, if on any day we Catholics ought to be proud, it is on Easter. We are followers of Christ. We have embraced His doctrine. We have accepted His teaching. And why? Because He claimed to be Divine and He proved that Divinity by rising from the grave, and today we raise our heads in holy pride that we are in the right fold, members of the true Church. Our Founder died. He went down seemingly to an ignominious grave, but He rose glorious and immortal. The founder of no other religious body has done that. Calvin and Luther, Henry VIII and Mrs. Eddy, and the rest of those whom poor, foolish, deluded men so blindly follow, died and they are still dead. Despite their claims, they had no Divine message; they could prove no heavenly mission. But Christ proved His, and He proved it today. And we, His followers, rejoice. This is the spirit of the day—a spirit of gladness in the fact that we are Catholics, though we must remember that our gladness is to show it-

self, not only in rejoicing, but especially in loyalty to the demands of our Faith, in giving to God even until it hurts.

From the contemplation, then, of the empty tomb of our risen Lord this blessed morning, let us go back to our daily tasks, to our household duties, to our business, with the consciousness that we have grasped better the worth of our religion and with the determination to live up to it more practically. Let us give thanks to God for the grand lessons of Easter Day, and let us try to carry its joy throughout our humdrum lives to cheer us in sorrow, to support us in temptation, to strengthen us to walk in Christ's footsteps, even though they may lead us up the hill of Calvary, even though loyalty to Him may mean crucifixion, for the darkness and gloom of our own Good Friday will surely be succeeded by the unending bliss and glory of an eternal Easter morn.



















